

a series of fact sheets written
by experts in the field of liver
disease

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Being an Effective Healthcare Consumer: Your Medical History

Lucinda Porter, RN

WHEN YOU SEE A NEW HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL the appointment starts with communicating details about your present and past medical history. The time you will have to talk will probably be short. You can maximize your time by preparing for the appointment. Keeping a written record of your medical history will help you use the time more efficiently. Bring a copy of this with you to the appointment. You can give your healthcare provider a copy or you can refer to it during the appointment.

What to include in a medical history:

- Your name, date of birth, and ethnic background.
- Any allergies to medications, food, or other substances.
- All dietary supplements and drugs that you are taking or have taken recently. Include prescribed, over-the-counter, etc.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Immunizations you have had and when.
- Any major illnesses you have been diagnosed with, especially those that are still active or have been diagnosed recently.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Lifestyle - Are you married? Any children? What are their ages? What is your occupation? What is your birthplace?
- Describe your drinking, smoking, eating and exercise habits.
- Places you traveled to recently that may have exposed you to any health risks.
- Family illnesses and cause of death of close relatives.
- Any recent life changes, such as divorce, job change, death or illness of family member or close friend.

- The names, address, and phone numbers of all healthcare providers and pertinent past providers.
- Any recent diagnostic results or other medical reports.

When listing your illnesses and surgeries, start with the most recent and work backwards. Your wisdom teeth removal when you were 15 years old is far less important than last year's gall bladder surgery. A recent diagnosis of thyroid disease is more important to mention than the bladder infection you had two years ago. The exception to this is if you are being seen for a current bladder infection and you get them frequently.

Try to be honest. It takes time to build trust. However, medical professionals who don't have all the information can't make informed recommendations. If a concern influences your ability to be truthful, state that. Saying, "I don't want to tell you that I smoke tobacco because I don't want to be lectured about it. The truth is I smoke, I know it is bad for me, and I am not ready to quit at this time. If I need your help with this in the future, I will bring it up." This is a clear message. It tells the healthcare provider that you are a smoker and relieves you of the fear of a lecture.

Stay current. Review your medical history annually and every time you have a change in your health. Pick an annual date for this review, such as around your birthday or after you file your income taxes. Keeping your medical history up to date before you have an urgent medical need will help you when you will need it the most.

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

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A publication of the Hepatitis C Support Project

**Executive Director
Editor-in-Chief, HCSP Publications**
Alan Franciscus

Design
Paula Fener

Production
C.D. Mazoff, PhD

Contact information:
Hepatitis C Support Project
PO Box 427037
San Francisco, CA 94142-7037
alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org

The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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