

YOUR SUPPORT: WHERE IT GOES

Due to the generous support of the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection, 100% of your donation goes directly to providing support, information and education.

Hepatitis B Vaccine: How Long Does it Last?

The conventional wisdom is that the protection provided by hepatitis B vaccination lasts for 20 years, after which booster shots may well be required. However, studies are suggesting that the vaccine's effect probably lasts considerably longer than has been assumed.

Researchers in Alaska estimated that 90% of a test group were still protected more than 20 years after the vaccination had been given and interestingly, there had been no long-term hepatitis B infections in the group; suggesting that the vaccine had provided a high level of protection.

Learn more :<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5A153S20091102>

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

ADDRESSING HEPATITIS IN THE E.U.

At least 23 million European Union (EU) citizens are currently living with hepatitis B or hepatitis C. In a direct response to the health burden this presents and the recent recognition by the WHO of the seriousness of hepatitis as a global health issue, a unique Partnership comprising key international public and private stakeholders has formed to drive the first EU-wide initiative on hepatitis B and C.

The new Partnership will work to achieve the formation of a European-wide strategy on the communication, prevention and management of viral hepatitis as a healthcare priority. As a first step towards this, the Partnership will host the *Hepatitis B and C Summit Conference* on 14-15th October 2010, where the latest research and advances will be presented and used to inform and drive future EU strategies and action plans in this neglected disease area. New studies will assess the impact of mobility of populations and patient self-help programmes in relation to the hepatitis epidemic.

Professor Angelos Hatzakis of Athens University Medical School and one of the co-chairs of the Partnership Steering Group said: "The burden and challenges associated with viral hepatitis across Europe require the active and concerted involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. Patients, specialists, primary health care providers, epidemiologists, policy makers, those responsible for health budgets, the general public, advocates, donors and the pharmaceutical sector should all work together to deliver the results so needed for these urgent diseases."

Nadine Piorkowsky, President of the European Liver Patients Association (ELPA) and co-chair of the Partnership Steering Group stated: "The development and implementation of specific policies to prevent, diagnose and control hepatitis B and C are long overdue as the burden of these diseases has significantly increased for the last ten years. This conference constitutes an important step forward as we will bring all the latest research to the table with a view to collectively evaluating the findings. The aim of this conference will be to present EU Member States with concrete policy recommendations on hepatitis B and C that can be implemented in their future health programmes."

For more on this see: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/199864.php>

[Experts Rally To Get European Commitment To Halting The Hepatitis B And C Epidemic](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/204813.php)

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/204813.php>

FOR NEW NOVA SCOTIANS:

PAMPHLETS IN SIX LANGUAGES

Thanks to the generous support of the Capital District Health Authority, HepNS has created 6 pamphlets about Hepatitis for newcomers to Nova Scotia.

Produced in Spanish, French, Mandarin, Farsi, Arabic and English, these pamphlets are available through the office or on our website under Education/Programs—For New Nova Scotians.

FIRST PERSON: SELF INJECTION ANGST

I thought it was odd that I was given an appointment with a new nurse practitioner for my second trip to the liver clinic. However, I was unsure of the protocol at the clinic so I assumed that I was supposed to have appointments with whoever was available at the time. I went into this appointment determined to convince the nurse practitioner that I wanted to do treatment. Immediately the appointment error was noted and she was adamant that I was not her patient, but she'd give me the results of my recent liver biopsy. The wonderful news was that I was very "lucky" and had 0-1 inflammation and there was no need to treat. She started into the mantra that I was expecting that the clinic would check me every so often to see how I was getting along with the virus...

I was not listening.

Prior to this appointment and after much investigation I had made up my mind that I was going to try to clear the virus by treating with interferon and ribavirin. I had weighed all the odds and I was determined. She tried to talk me out of it and when she realized that I was unwavering she reluctantly took out a kit and went through a demonstration of how to inject myself with the redi-pen. The pen was hauled out snapped, jostled, wiped, screwed, dialled and squirted into the air at warp speed. I did not realize at that moment that the demo was probably filled with water and was horrified at the waste. I was overwhelmed with the procedure.

Good Grief! I had to go through hoops of fire to get to the actual injection. There was a reprieve though, a CD was supplied that I could enjoy at my own leisure at home.

I walked out of the office with my stylish blue and back carrier bag filled with two demo redi-pens, water bottle, redi-pen storage case, journal and a sharps bin to dispose of the used needles. When I arrived home the kit was cautiously taken apart and inspected. I was fearful and anxious at the same time.

It seemed to take forever to get notification of my start date for treatment. It was not until I received notification of an actual date that I put the training CD in my laptop. I watched it several times and I had to bite the bullet and try one of the demos. I can remember the struggle I had following the instructions and trying to use the demo at the same time. The video was watched several more times over the next few weeks before I sacrificed the second demo redi-pen. The real test would be trying to inject that needle into my stomach.

I had to do it. I was not backing down.

The big day arrived and I had to go to the pharmacy located in the hospital to receive my first prescription of anti-viral meds. I was not impressed as the meds had to be packed in ice and my husband had to carry a huge Styrofoam container through the hospital up to the 9th floor to the liver clinic. I felt like I had a neon sign positioned above my head claiming..."LOOK THIS WOMAN HAS HEP C AND IS GETTING HER FIRST INJECTION TODAY!" My nurse practitioner met us in the hall and ushered us into her office only to my angst to see two "doctors in training" traipse in behind her to watch the show. My stomach dropped. The anxiety of having to inject myself along with having to keep a stiff upper lip for others at the same time was daunting. It was a new twist on an extremely stressful situation for me.

Continued on page 4

THANK YOU AUCTION 2010 DONORS:

Due to an editing error, two of our Art | Etc Online Auction donors were omitted from our Summer 2010 Newsletter donor thank you list.

With sincere apology and deep gratitude we thank:

**Donna Clark from Attitudes Hair Design, Halifax &
Christine Land of Shoppers Drug Mart, Yarmouth**

FROM THE WEB:

IMMUNE STRENGTHENING THIS FLU SEASON

The seasonal change from summer to autumn brings colourful leaves, fireplace coziness and a string of holidays; but it can also hail the unwelcome array of fevers, sneezing, congestion and coughing - the arrival of cooler temperatures and crisp air marks the official onset of cold and flu season. Unfortunately, those with chronic Hepatitis C often have a rougher time managing a cold or flu than those without liver disease. Although it may not be realistic to completely prevent getting sick, it is possible to reduce your chance of becoming really ill and curb cold and flu symptoms in a Hepatitis C-friendly way.

The biggest obstacle most people with Hepatitis C face during the cold and flu season is finding medications that are safe for their liver. Because the Hepatitis C virus continually incites liver inflammation that can lead to liver damage, it is important for affected individuals to avoid medications known to injure the liver.

A staple in the pharmaceutical arsenal for cold and flu symptoms, acetaminophen is a widely used over-the-counter pain reliever and fever reducer. As one of the leading causes of liver toxicity from an accidental overdose, acetaminophen-containing drugs warrant an additional level of caution for people with Hepatitis C. Unfortunately, acetaminophen is either the primary or auxiliary ingredient in a majority of medications for cold and flu.

When it comes to mitigating the cold and flu season, the best offense is always a strong defense. By fortifying their immune system, many sail straight through to spring without getting terribly sick. An effective defense against germs is primarily accomplished by strengthening the immune system. The top three approaches for this include:

Hygiene - Washing your hands thoroughly and frequently helps get rid of germs acquired from everyday surfaces. Even with frequent hand washing, make sure to keep your hands away from your face to deny germs access to your respiratory system. Cold and flu virus transmission can be also be minimized by wiping down germ-filled areas (light switches, door knobs, tabletops, computer keyboards, remotes, etc.) frequently.

Stay Healthy - This might seem obvious, but staying healthy is usually a matter of adhering to general health practices. To keep the immune system strong, stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, eat a nutritious diet full of fruit and vegetables, exercise regularly and make sure you get plenty of rest. Following these overstated principles of health has the indisputable effect of defending against cold and flu viruses.

Consider the Flu Vaccine - Although receiving the seasonal flu vaccine is controversial, it is one of the most effective ways to prevent flu. Studies have found that in healthy adults, the flu vaccine can decrease the chances of coming down with the flu by as much as 70 to 90 percent. Of course, the flu vaccine only defends against a particular strain of influenza; it does not offer any protection against a cold or other flu viruses.

If all of your preventative approaches fall short this fall and winter, more ammunition may be necessary. The following five strategies can help reduce the severity and length of a cold or flu without posing any risks to a liver with Hepatitis C:

Vitamin C - Especially useful at the first symptoms of a cold or flu, Vitamin C helps many people ward off illness. While a significant boost of Vitamin C is typically suggested, the Institute of Medicine advises drawing the line at 2,000 mg daily to avoid gastrointestinal or kidney problems.

Gargle - To ease throat pain and inflammation, gargling with salt water helps draw infectious particles out of the affected tissue.

Steam - Breathing in steam helps keep mucous membranes moist and break up congestion. Adding one drop of eucalyptus essential oil to a bowl of hot water or the shower stall will add another dimension to clearing the sinuses.

Zinc - Shown to be more effective at the beginning of a cold or flu, zinc increases the production of disease-fighting white blood cells.

N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC) - A precursor to glutathione, the principal antioxidant made in the body, NAC helps the liver break down hazardous compounds. This detoxification function makes NAC an important supplement for those with Hepatitis C. Additionally, NAC helps clear congested lungs and reduces cold and flu symptoms. Based on a study at the Institute of Hygiene and Preventive Medicine at the University of Genoa, Italy, NAC supplements reduced the likelihood of having flu symptoms by more than two-thirds.

Armed with the wisdom that you can strengthen resistance to getting sick and treat a cold or flu without harming the liver, there is no longer any reason for those with Hepatitis C to fear the onset of autumn.

Nicole Cutler, L.Ac

(Edited for space)

http://www.hepatitis-central.com/mt/archives/2010/10/hepatitis_c_eig.html?eml=hepcen117

ABOUT US

The Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia is a volunteer-driven charitable organization committed to community capacity and development, health promotion, public awareness and implementation of social support networks throughout Nova Scotia for those living with or affected by; and those at-risk of developing Hepatitis.

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Community Connections is a quarterly informative publication of the Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia. We welcome your comments and contributions.

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SELF INJECTION ANGST CONTINUED

I'll never forget the moment when it came time to jab the needle into my stomach. It was down to the dreaded time and I can remember holding the needle poised and ready and stalled at that moment of hesitation. The nurse practitioner started to assist, but I took that moment of sheer determination to jam the needle in and get it done. It was a huge accomplishment for me. I have to admit that it was a great effort for me to complete the next 71 injections. I always struggled with that moment of hesitation each and every time I was ready to insert the needle.

Rose

WALKING FOR A CAUSE



HepNS Team of board members, staff and volunteers participate in AIDS Walk for Life 2010. From left to right are: Heather D'Entremont, Juanita MacPhee, Colin Green, Joseph Sholtes, Wanda MacDonald, Robert MacDonald

We Want To Hear From You:

First person accounts are the most popular articles in our newsletter. To share a story, contact Newsletter@HepatitisOutreach.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION !

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Please send me further information about HepNS

I would like to make this donation in memory / honor of _____

Your support allows HepNS to provide valuable education, information and support across the province of Nova Scotia.

An income tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more.

Donations can also be given on our website or through Visa and Mastercard by calling 902-420-1767

Please make cheques payable to Hepatitis Outreach Society and mail to:

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