

What is a healthy diet for people with hepatitis?



FACTSHEET 06

Hepatitis Council of Qld



Eating a well balanced diet with plenty of different types of food is the best way to ensure you are doing all you can to keep yourself healthy

What is a healthy diet for people with hepatitis?

A well balanced diet should provide all the vitamins and minerals you need. A healthy diet can be an easy diet: one that includes a variety of nutritious food eaten regularly and that doesn't follow strict dietary restrictions unless medically necessary. Generally the cost of a healthy diet is less than buying groceries plus a variety of vitamin and herbal supplements.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults* recommends enjoying a wide variety of nutritious foods:

- **Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits;**
- **Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles) - preferably wholegrain;**
- **Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives;**
- **Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives (reduced-fat varieties should be chosen where possible);**
- **Drink plenty of water;**
- **Limit saturated fat and moderate your total fat intake;**
- **Limit your alcohol intake if you chose to drink;**

- **Consume only a moderate amount of sugar and foods containing added sugars.**

If you are eating a variety of foods, you will be getting all the nutrients you need. These foods contain the following nutrients:

- **Wholegrain cereals have plenty of B vitamins and fibre;**
- **Fruit and vegetables contain vitamin C and folate;**
- **Dairy foods are a great source of calcium;**
- **Red meats are rich in iron and zinc;**
- **Fish is an excellent source of omega 3 fats;**
- **Nuts and vegetable oils contain essential fatty acids and vitamin E.**

Fats

You don't need to cut out fats and oils just because you have hepatitis C. Everyone needs some dietary fat so their body can function well. Reducing saturated fat intake and increasing mono- and polyunsaturated fats is the key to a healthier diet.



The ABC of Hepatitis Training Package is an initiative of Queensland Health through funding provided by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing under the National Hepatitis C Prevention and Education Initiative

Updated: 3 April 2009

For more information www.hepqld.asn.au
or Hepatitis Council of Qld info line **1800 648 491**

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Dairy products

There is no reason for people with hepatitis to avoid dairy foods. Milk and milk products are excellent sources of nutrients such as calcium, riboflavin, protein and vitamin B12. Without consuming dairy products it can be hard to get enough calcium in your diet. If you can't tolerate milk or milk products, use calcium enriched soymilk or try foods such as sardines, salmon, lentils, almonds, brazil nuts and dried apricots – which provide smaller amounts of calcium.

Sugar

There is no published scientific evidence to suggest that people with hepatitis have any problems metabolising sugar. Manufactured foods, such as lollies and sweets, often have large amounts of sugar added to them during processing. It is better to obtain energy (sugars) from nutrient rich foods such as wholegrain breads and cereals, meats, fruits, nuts, fish, tofu or vegetables.

Caffeine

There is no scientific evidence to suggest that tea, coffee or caffeine-containing drinks cause particular problems for people with hepatitis, if these are consumed in moderation. In fact, studies have shown that people with hepatitis who drink moderate amounts of coffee have a lower risk of developing liver cancer. If you experience fatigue you may find that avoiding caffeine-containing beverages in the evenings will improve your sleep.

Herbal supplements

Dietary advice should be based on individual circumstances and will depend on what symptoms are being experienced. Unless there is a clinical deficiency or particular symptoms or illness, dietary supplements or herbal treatments are generally not needed. Use only herbal treatments and supplements after you have spoken to your doctor, as they may be toxic to your liver.

Interested in finding out more?

Factsheets

- 01 Alcohol and viral hepatitis
- 04 Complementary therapies & hepatitis
- 10 Fatigue & insomnia
- 14 Hepatitis C: an Australian snapshot
- 26 Hep C, my baby and me
- 37 Hepatitis B: what you need to know

Booklets

- The Guide to Healthy Eating for People with Hepatitis C (*Hepatitis Australia*)
- Hepatitis C Information Kit (*Hepatitis Council of QLD*)
- Health Care Worker – Guide to nutrition and hepatitis C (*Hepatitis Council of QLD & Albion Street Centre*)

Organisations

- **Hepatitis Council of Queensland**
(07) 3236 0612 1800 648 491
www.hepqld.asn.au
- **Dietitians Association of Australia**
www.daa.asn.au
- **Your GP**

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