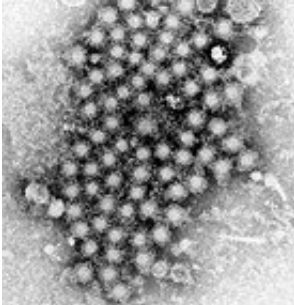


One man's harrowing battle with hepatitis C

December 21 2012, by Serena Gordon, Healthday Reporter



Electron micrograph of hepatitis virus. Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Ted Adamson of Riverside, Calif., nearly lost his liver and life to the disease.

(HealthDay)—Ted Adamson's liver had been so ravaged by the hepatitis C virus that he was nearly at the point of needing a liver transplant. Yet he had no symptoms. None. He didn't even feel tired.

Fortunately for Adamson, a move from one state to another had prompted a health insurance change, and his new doctor suggested a battery of tests, including a [hepatitis C](#) test. Adamson wasn't particularly concerned about [hepatitis C](#), but because he'd had a blood transfusion after an accident in the mid-1970s, and he'd been a drug user in his late teens and 20s, he agreed to the test.

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"I was shocked when the doctor told me I had hepatitis C," said Adamson, of Riverside, Calif. "I was completely asymptomatic, and I'd been off drugs for 35 years." He added that it's not clear whether he got hepatitis C from his [blood transfusion](#) or the drug use.

The doctor recommended a [liver biopsy](#), which means a small piece of the liver is surgically removed and tested to assess the extent of the damage.

"The doctor told me I had stage 3, grade 3 liver disease," Adamson said. "Stage 4 is cirrhosis, and at that point the damage is irreversible and you need a transplant. I was right on the edge of that. My liver was nearly destroyed. I think if I hadn't stopped drinking and doing drugs so long before that, I probably would've died a long time before now."

When Adamson was diagnosed in 2005, he was told that treatments were about 40 percent successful in curing hepatitis C. Since then, treatments have become significantly more effective.

"I was a little bit concerned about the possible side effects of treatment because I'd also had a mild [heart attack](#) a few years earlier, but then I realized I would die of [liver disease](#) if I didn't take the treatment," he explained.

Adamson said he was on a [combination therapy](#) for 12 months, responded well to the treatment and had no noticeable side effects. After a year of treatment, he no longer had hepatitis C. He was cured.

"My liver enzymes went back to normal, and my doctors told me that the liver is one of the few organs that can heal itself," he said.

His advice for others? First, if you've been diagnosed with hepatitis C, "don't delay in getting treatment," he said. "I heard about alternatives

like herbs, but the only thing with a proven record of success is treatment from your doctor," he added.

"I'm lucky," Adamson said. "I hadn't progressed to the point where the damage to my liver was irreversible. My story had a happy ending."

And for everyone else, get screened, Adamson said, because he's living proof that you can have this disease for years and years without knowing it.

"It really is a silent killer," he said.

More information: To learn more about hepatitis, visit the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#).

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