

# Your guide to hepatitis C medications

June 8 2023, by Ann Schreiber

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Hepatitis C is a serious viral infection that can scar your liver, cause your liver to fail and raise your risk for liver cancer, but there are a multitude of medications that can treat it.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, an estimated [2.4 million Americans live with hepatitis C](#). Effective treatments are crucial for combating this viral infection. Hepatitis C antiviral medications offer hope in managing the disease. Here, experts identify the most common hepatitis C medications, exploring their mechanisms of action and the potential side effects they may entail.

## Hepatitis C medications

Per the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA), antiviral medications play a vital role in managing hepatitis C. By suppressing viral activity, these medications can prevent further liver damage and halt the progression of advanced scarring of the liver, known as cirrhosis.

In an interview with *HealthDay*, [Dr. Hardeep Singh](#), a gastroenterologist with Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Orange County, Calif., said that, "All patients with chronic hepatitis C should be considered for antiviral therapy so that the complications of liver disease can be avoided. This is especially important given our newer direct antiviral agents that have come available in the last few years. These are oral therapies that can typically cure hepatitis C in approximately 97% of patients with a three-month regimen. They are not only highly efficacious but are very well tolerated, with minimal side effects."

As the [Cleveland Clinic](#) explains, these antiviral medications target the virus's replication process. They can inhibit the virus from entering [healthy cells](#), disrupt its ability to replicate and spread or interfere with specific viral enzymes essential for survival.

By disrupting the viral life cycle, antivirals help to reduce the viral load (the amount of active virus) in the body. This targeted approach is crucial in treating hepatitis C, as it directly combats the virus responsible for the infection.

## Hepatitis C medications: What to know about antiviral drugs

Antiviral medications for hepatitis C offer a comprehensive approach to managing the disease, providing numerous benefits. They target the hepatitis C virus directly, aiming to eliminate it from the body while also slowing down liver damage and reducing the risks of advanced scarring, [liver cancer](#) and liver failure. In the following sections, experts will delve into the specific hepatitis C medications, exploring how they work and their common side effects.

According to the VA, [significant progress has been made](#) since 2014 in developing antiviral treatments for hepatitis C, resulting in a wide range of options available today. The expanding repertoire of treatments has introduced a scenario where patients often have multiple suitable choices. These treatments can be categorized as first-line, second-line and less commonly used alternatives, reflecting the abundance of available choices and the need for personalized treatment decisions.

### Common hepatitis C medications include:

- Elbasvir/Grazoprevir (Zepatier)
- Glecaprevir/Pibrentasvir (Mavyret)
- Sofosbuvir/Ledipasvir (Harvoni)
- Sofosbuvir/Velpatasvir (Epclusa)

[Dr. Alfredo Mena Lora](#), director of infection prevention/infectious diseases at Saint Anthony Hospital in Chicago, told *HealthDay* that, "There are multiple options, and your physician will pick the best drug based on the type of hepatitis C virus you have after genotype testing... These are all oral combination pills that are taken from eight to 16 weeks [usually 12 weeks] and can lead to full eradication of the virus."

## Second-line hepatitis C medications:

- Sofosbuvir/Velpatasvir/Voxelaprevir (Vosevi)

## Common side effects of hepatitis C antiviral medications

As with any [medication](#), [hepatitis C antiviral medications](#) can be associated with specific side effects. Be aware of these potential effects while undergoing treatment. According to the American Liver Foundation, [typical side effects of antiviral medications for hepatitis C](#) may include:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Insomnia
- Muscle and joint pain
- Decreased appetite
- Rash or skin reactions
- Depression or mood changes
- Anemia

## The importance of hepatitis C medications in improving lives

With advancements in antiviral treatments, the aim of complete viral clearance and reduced liver damage can be achieved.

While these medications may come with specific side effects, their benefits in terms of long-term [liver](#) health and overall well-being cannot be overstated.

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Citation: Your guide to hepatitis C medications (2023, June 8) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-hepatitis-medications.html>

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