

Emotional Challenges of Chronic Hepatitis
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Diagnosis

Shock & disbelief

Symptom Range

Slow growing virus

Fatigue

Jaundice (skin, sclera)

Dark orange urine

Nausea

Fever

Itchy skin

Abdominal discomfort

Special Issues with Hepatitis C

Feeling low energy

Feeling contaminated

How you got infected

No outward signs of illness, so no support

Fluctuating nature of symptoms

Lack of information and support

Adapting

Health beliefs

Social support

Social roles, income, care giving, place in family/social systems

General coping strategies

Health care regimen

Psychological Issues

Grief

Anger

Depression

Cognitive changes

Self-image

Relapse triggers

Mental health and substance abuse treatment implications

Information needs

Individual and family issues/counseling

Coping strategies for decreased cognitive functioning

Coping strategies for decreased physical/sexual functioning

Need for psychiatric medications

Medication triggers for relapse

Fatigue

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Other self-healing tools: nutrition, mild exercise, music, spirituality, creative expressions

Coping with medical “treatment failure”

Implications for mental health and substance abuse treatment providers

Information

Expert consultation and referral sources to separate medical from psychological symptoms

Resources for hepatitis testing and immunization for hepatitis A and B, referral for medical care, community support groups