A drinker with hepatitis C has a much greater risk for cirrhosis than a non-drinker with hepatitis C.

## Important Definitions You Should Know

**Chronic Hepatitis C:** disease of the liver that remains throughout the course of the individual's life.

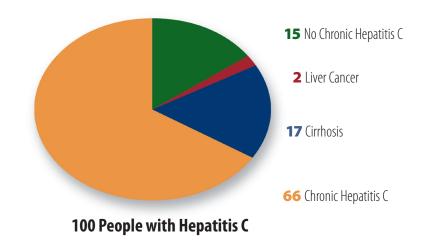
**Fibrosis:** mild to moderate scarring of the liver.

**Cirrhosis:** the end result of damage to the cells in the liver. Cirrhosis can be caused by many things, including viral hepatitis or alcohol, or both.

**Liver Biopsy:** a procedure in which a small piece of liver is removed with a needle and examined to find out exactly how much liver damage is present. The biopsy is rated on a scale from 0 (normal liver) to 4 (cirrhosis).

Advanced Liver Disease: symptoms of advanced liver disease include: fatigue, difficulty concentrating, yellow jaundice, fluid in the abdomen, bleeding, and poor blood clotting.

**Liver Cancer:** a type of cancer, known as hepatocellular carcinoma, that develops in the liver as a result of viral hepatitis, cirrhosis, or alcohol.



# What Happens to People with Hepatitis C?

For every 100 people with hepatitis C, 15 people are able to get rid of the virus by their own immune system. **85 will develop chronic, or long-term, infection.** 

Of these 85 people, the virus causes only minor liver damage in 66 of them. 17 people develop cirrhosis and may have symptoms of advanced liver disease. 2 people will develop liver cancer.

Your liver health can be related to **choices you make** about your *lifestyle*.

## Alcohol's Effect on Treatment

People who don't drink before starting antiviral therapy tend to have better response rates than drinkers.

### **12 Heavy Drinkers**





In one study, infrequent or non-drinkers successfully responded to antiviral treatment\*

3 times more often than heavy drinkers.

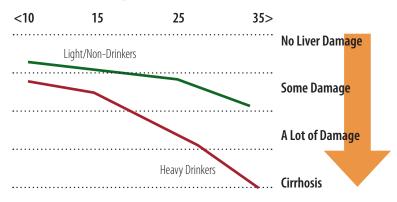
Out of 36 people who drank heavily prior to treatment, only 3 people, or 1 in 12, cleared the virus.

Another study found that people who drink soon before antiviral treatment drop out 50% more often than those who abstain for a period of time.

# Alcohol Use ...and Liver Health

Alcohol use accelerates the decline to cirrhosis

#### **Years of Hepatitis C Infection**

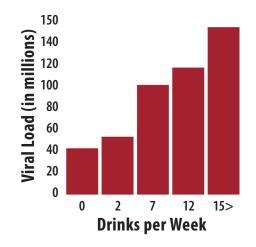


### ...and Viral Load

Heavy alcohol use weakens your immune system

Viral load is how much virus can be found in a test tube of blood. It is affected by many things, including alcohol.

This study found that people who drank more tended to have more virus in their bloodstream.



One Standard Drink: 12 oz. Beer 4 oz. Wine 1.5 oz. Liquor

### For More Information

#### **VA Hepatitis C Website**

http://www.hepatitis.va.gov

#### **Alcohol Screening**

http://www.alcoholscreening.org

#### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

#### **American Liver Foundation**

http://www.liverfoundation.org

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis

#### **Center for Substance Abuse Treatment**

http://csat.samhsa.gov

#### National Institute on Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism

http://www.niaaa.nih.gov

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VA Hepatitis C Resource Center Program National Hepatitis C Program Office Veterans Health Administration U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## Hepatitis C and Alcohol



What you should know to make informed decisions about your liver health



