



## GROUP HEALTH CENTRE

240 McNabb Street  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 1Y5  
Tel: 705.759.1234  
www.ghc.on.ca

## Ontario Hepatitis Nursing Program

# How Do Alcohol, Drugs & Cigarettes Affect Those with Hep C?

©GHC Communications 02/2010

~ Alcohol can harm your liver more than any other substance.

~ It has been proven that drinking too much alcohol over a long period of time causes liver diseases such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.

~ Drinking alcohol and Hep C do more harm together than each does alone.

~ Regular drinking raises the amount of Hep C virus in the body.

~ People with Hep C who are alcoholics are much more likely to develop cirrhosis and cancer of the liver.

~ Women who drink alcohol develop liver disease more easily than men who do, and they require less alcohol for this to happen.

~ Alcohol interferes with the liver's ability to heal itself.

~ People with Hep C who drink regularly can lose important vitamins.

### ***Should I stop drinking completely?***

~ **YES, you should stop drinking completely.**

~ We do not know what a safe drinking level is for people with Hep C, so it is best to stop drinking alcohol completely.

~ It isn't easy to stop drinking, but it is the most important change that you can make to help prevent cirrhosis or liver cancer.

### ***What if I can't stop drinking?***

~ Try to reduce the amount and frequency that you drink.

~ One kind of alcoholic drink is not better for your liver than another.

~ It is the amount of alcohol in the drink that matters, not the type of drink.

~ The following are equal in alcohol content:

12 oz. of beer

5 oz. of wine

3 oz. of sherry or port

1-1/2 oz. of spirits (*rum, rye, vodka, etc.*)

~ If you drink alcohol regularly you should not take Tylenol - together they are very damaging to the liver.

If you cannot stop drinking alcohol or using drugs keep the following in mind:

- While you are using drugs and alcohol try to eat well and drink lots of water before you start and while you are using.
- Binges are harder on your liver than spreading your use over time - try to give your liver a rest by taking two alcohol and drug free days a week.
- If you can't take two days off from using, then take one. If you can't take a whole day off, take a few hours.
- It is especially important to take a break after big binges.
- During your break get lots of rest, drink lots of water and eat well.

### ***Alcohol and Drug Treatment:***


~ **If you are still drinking alcohol you cannot receive Hep C drug treatment.**

~ Drinking reduces the effectiveness of drug treatment.

### ***Smoking and Liver Disease:***

~ Studies show that people who smoked in the past and people who continue to smoke have more swelling and scarring of their livers than non-smokers do.

~ Researchers recommend that people with Hep C should stop or reduce smoking as it could make their liver disease worse.



**“Most people who have Hep C live long and healthy lives if they don't drink alcohol. We have the best treatments that we've ever had.”** Hannah (Registered Nurse)