

**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.

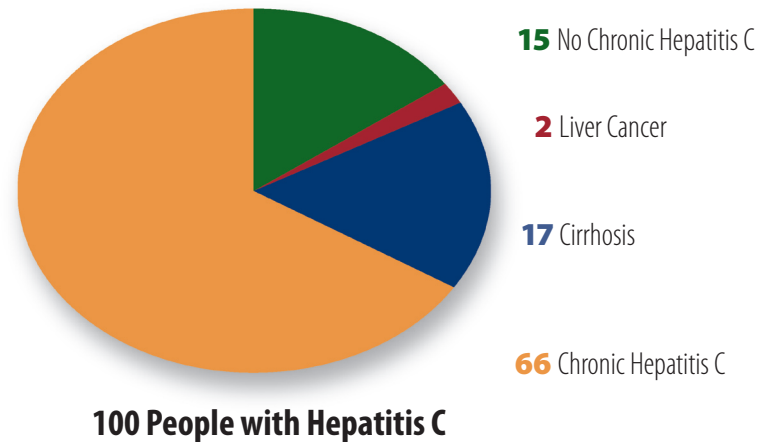
**Fibrosis:** mild to moderate scarring of the liver.

**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



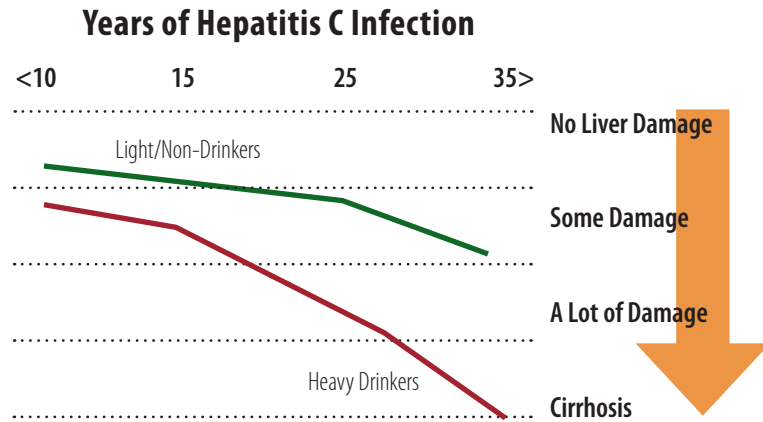
In one study, infrequent or non-drinkers successfully responded to antiviral treatment\* **3 times more often** than heavy drinkers.

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

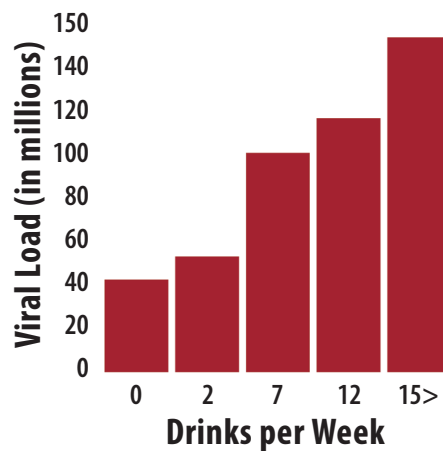


## ...and Viral Load

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>

### References

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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*



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

