Hepatitis C symptom #6:

Flu-like symptoms

Flu-like symptoms are caused by a chemical called interferon. Interferon is a natural chemical produced by our immune systems. When we fight a cold or flu, we feel the effects of our interferon in the form of symptoms, such as fever, chills and aches.

**Flu-like symptoms**
- Fever – This is when the human body temperature goes above the normal range of 36–37 degrees celsius. An elevated body temperature is one of the ways our immune system attempts to fight infections.
- Chills – Feelings of cold accompanied by shivering. Chills often accompany a fever.
- Malaise – A general feeling of discomfort or being unwell.
- Body aches – This is when your body feels physical pain. It is a sign your body is dealing with a condition that affects the body as a whole.
- Headaches – A continuous pain felt in the head.
- Fatigue – A tried feeling, such as exhaustion or feeling lethargic.
- Weakness – When your body feels tired and you may not be able to move.
- Night sweats – Sweating a lot during the night when your bedroom is not hot and without extra clothing or bed covers.

All of the symptoms of the flu may not be present and the severity of the symptoms can differ from one person to another.

**People with hepatitis C can sometimes experience flu-like symptoms. These usually last a few days to a week, however they can last longer. It can leave you feeling run-down.**

**Treatment**
Flu-like symptoms are a common side-effect of the current hepatitis C treatment of pegylated interferon and ribavirin. Manufactured interferon, called pegylated interferon, causes the same effects as our own internal interferon. Usually, the symptoms lessen after two or three weeks of taking the drug.

**Managing flu-like symptoms**
Coping with flu-like symptoms can be difficult and you can feel like there’s not much you can do.

Your doctor may be able to prescribe some pain relief medication or anti-inflammatory medication to help with symptoms, such as fevers and aches. You may also be able to purchase over-the-counter medication which can help ease symptoms, however you must always follow manufacturer’s directions and never exceed the recommended dose. Some medications can impact your liver.

Take a look at some of the tips on the next page to help you cope. Remember, if you aren’t feeling 100 per cent, take it easy and ask family and friends for help.
Tips for managing flu-like symptoms

Get plenty of rest and listen to your body. Some exercise can boost energy levels.

Drink plenty of water.

Put layers of blankets and clothes at your bedside to manage chills.

Eat a diet full of vitamins and minerals to give your body the best fuel.

Try gentle stretching exercises.

Avoid stress, as it is associated with changes in the functioning of the immune cells.

Take a warm bath or shower.

If you are on hepatitis C treatment, inject pegylated interferon before bed to try and sleep through the worst of the discomfort.

Some herbal products, such as herbal tea, may help some people feel better.

Put layers of blankets and clothes at your bedside to manage chills.

A wash cloth on the forehead or back of the neck may feel good.

You may find the application of heat or cold packs to the joints and muscles helps in relieving some of the discomfort.

Mild physical activity increases the blood flow to joints and muscles which may reduce stiffness.

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If you continue to have problems with flu-like symptoms speak to your health provider, who may be able to help.

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