

a series of fact sheets written  
by experts in the field of liver  
disease

## *HCV Treatment Side Effect Management: Rashes*

Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

*It seems like almost every patient on HCV treatment develops some type of skin problem. The most common skin problem is caused by ribavirin – the “RIBAVIRIN” rash. Other skin problems are generally not as serious but can be very annoying. Interferon can induce underlying autoimmune skin diseases such as psoriasis or lichen planus. Do not self-diagnose, be sure to consult with a medical professional or a dermatologist (skin specialist) if the rash is worrisome, painful or itchy. It is even more important to see a specialist if there is any redness, swelling, accumulation of fluid or pus.*

Interferon and ribavirin can cause dry skin, so it's not surprising that most people suffer from this type of side effect. The symptoms of dry skin can be mild dry flaky skin to severe skin irritation including bumps and blisters. The itching

associated with a rash can be mildly annoying to so irritating that you feel like you want to jump out of your skin. Most often itching seems to be worse in the evening, which may interfere with sleep leading to insomnia and a whole list of other symptoms.

Generally, rashes are not particularly dangerous except in instances where they become infected. Signs and symptoms of serious skin infection include:

- Pus, especially any pus that leaks from the skin
- Red streaks in the infected area
- General redness around the infected area
- Increased pain
- Swelling around the affected area
- Fever or chills

If you notice any of the above symptoms talk to your medical provider before the infection can become a severe problem.

To prevent the rash from becoming infected one of the best strategies is to not scratch the skin and to never use fingernails or sharp instruments to scratch with. This is especially important for people on therapy since interferon can lower the white blood cell count, which can lead to a greater chance of infection.

There are many steps one can take to help to alleviate some of the symptoms of dry skin, such as itching, and to help to prevent dry skin from becoming infected. Try some of these simple tips:

- Try rubbing, pressure or vibration instead of scratching
- Drink plenty of water or other clear fluids to keep your entire body hydrated

- Apply moisturizer immediately after a shower or bath - before drying off with a towel
- Apply moisturizer a least twice a day— Common types of lotions include Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion, Aveeno Body Lotion or petroleum type lotion.
- Use only non-perfumed, mild bath and personal products
- Avoid hot showers and baths
- Take an oatmeal bath to relieve the itching and help with relaxation (try putting one cup of oatmeal in warm bath)
- Try baking soda or bath oils for bathing
- Apply cold packs (wrapped in a towel) to the skin
- Wear loose fitting clothes made from natural fabrics that breathe
- Protect your skin from the sun – wear sunscreen
- Protect your lips – use Chapstick with sunscreen
- Get plenty of rest
- Keep rooms ventilated and between 60 and 70 degrees




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- A Guide to Hepatitis C: Treatment Side Effect Management
- Managing Side Effects of HCV Treatment
- Side Effect Management: Anxiety, Mania, and Depression
- Side Effect Management: Dental Hygiene
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