

BOX 1: Anti-HCV Drugs

Ribavirin

Ribavirin is a nucleoside analog that functions as an immunomodulator in HCV infection by influencing TNF level. Although the drug becomes incorporated into the HCV RNA, acting as a direct mutagen to the viral RNA, this is not the primary mechanism of action in the treatment of chronic infection.

Interferon alfa

Interferon alfa is a naturally occurring cytokine that the body normally produces. While it may have a minor direct antiviral effect, it functions primarily to recruit cells to kill the virus by activating resting cells. Pegylation increases the half-life of the drug.

Interferon and ribavirin are contraindicated in pregnancy.⁸

(see HCV101, page 7 for details on side effects)

BOX 2: A Measure of Prevention

According to current guidelines, vaccination against HAV is recommended for HCV-infected individuals who have no serologic evidence of immunity. Vaccination against HBV may also be beneficial as fulminant liver failure may occur following coinfection with either virus.⁶

Virus	Vaccine Brand Name, Manufacturer	Dosing schedule
HAV	HAVRIX, GlaxoSmithKline VAQTA, Merck & Co.	2 doses: 0 mo. + booster at 6-12 mo.
HBV	Engerix B, GlaxoSmithKline Recombivax HBR, Merck & Co.	3 doses: 0, 1, and 6 mo. OR 0,1, and 4 mo.
HAV/HBV	Twinrix, GlaxoSmithKline (combination vaccine)	3 doses: 0, 1, and 6 mo. ²²