

Harvoni for the treatment of Hepatitis C

Department of Hepatology

Digestive Diseases Centre

This leaflet is designed to give you important information about your new medicine. It is not intended to replace the patient information leaflet (PIL) that comes with the medicine, but is designed to be read in conjunction with it. If you have any questions about Harvoni, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What does the treatment involve?

Harvoni is a treatment for Hepatitis C. It is a tablet only based treatment. Harvoni is sometimes taken with another tablet called Ribavirin. The treatment aims to completely clear the Hepatitis C virus from the body. Although the treatment is very effective, it is not guaranteed to work for everyone.

These medications are taken in combination and should not be used alone.

How is it taken?

Harvoni - Harvoni is a combination tablet containing 2 drugs, Ledipasvir 90mg and Sofosbuvir 400mg. The recommended dose is one tablet once a day. Swallow the tablet whole **with or without food**. Do not chew, crush or split the tablet as it has a bitter taste. If you have any problems swallowing, tell your nurse doctor or pharmacist

Ribavirin - A tablet that must be taken **with food**. These tablets are to be taken in the morning and evening each day. Your nurse/doctor will tell you exactly how many tablets to take (the number of tablets depends on your weight and blood results).

How much food do I need to take with my tablets?

You can take Harvoni with or without food. There are no specific types or amounts of food that need to be taken with Ribavirin. You can take it with a substantial snack, a main meal or up to 30 minutes after a main meal.

What are the common side effects?

Harvoni

Harvoni, like all other medicines, has some side effects. Most of these are minor and will settle within a few days or weeks.

- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Insomnia (not sleeping).

Ribavirin

- Anaemia (lowering of the red blood cells that carry oxygen)
- Itching and rashes
- Dry cough
- Muscular aches
- Ribavirin is also toxic to a developing baby – your doctor or nurse will therefore explain the importance of not getting pregnant (or getting anyone pregnant) during treatment and for six months after the course finishes. We advise that you use two methods of contraception (condoms and one other) for the duration of treatment and for a further six months after.

What medicines should I avoid with Harvoni?

It is always important to make your doctor and pharmacist aware of any medicines you take to ensure that they are compatible with Harvoni. This includes any recreational, over-the-counter or herbal medications. Before starting any new medications you must check they are safe to take with your clinic nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

Important Information

You must not stop, or allow anyone else to stop, your treatment unless discussed with the doctor or nurse in charge of your Hepatitis C treatment.

Storage of medications

There are no special storage instructions for Harvoni or Ribavirin; however they should be kept in a safe place, away from children.

Looking after yourself on treatment

To lessen the side effects of treatment we advise you aim to drink two litres of water a day, keep skin well moisturised, avoid alcohol, use sunscreen and eat little and often. If you experience any side effects, and either they are troubling you or you develop any new symptoms after you start your treatment, tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist who will advise you what to do.

Further Information

British Liver Trust – www.britishlivertrust.org.uk – 0800 652 7330

Liver4Life – www.liver4life.org.uk – 08000 743494

Hepatitis C Trust – www.hepctrust.org.uk – 0845 223 4424

Special Requirements

If you have a special requirement or you have vision, mobility or access issues please call **01273 664541** for further advice/information.

If you have a question about Harvoni or any of your medicines, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Contact

Hepatology Nurses

Telephone: **01273 664541**

What if I...

Get a headache or just need a pain killer?

Paracetamol can be taken with Harvoni. We do not advise Ibuprofen (or medications in this family, called NSAIDS) in patients with significant liver scarring or cirrhosis.

Get hayfever or have other allergies?

The antihistamines Cetirizine and Hydroxyzine can be taken with Harvoni. If you feel your allergy is related to Harvoni or any other medicines, speak to your clinic doctor/nurse or pharmacist before taking any medicines. You should speak to your doctor or pharmacist before using any nasal sprays or getting any injections, to check for possible interactions with Harvoni and any other medicines you are taking.

Get diarrhoea?

For short-term diarrhoea relief, you can use Loperamide. Remember to drink plenty of fluids. If you get a lot of diarrhoea and it lasts more than a few days, contact your clinic to ask for advice.

Get heartburn, reflux, indigestion or need medicines for stomach ulcers?

Antacids may be taken with Harvoni providing that you take them four hours before or after Harvoni. Medicines such as Omeprazole and Lansoprazole can be taken at exactly the same time as Harvoni, but never just before. *If you need to take one of these medications, please speak to your clinic doctor / nurse or pharmacist before you start taking it.*

Am prescribed or take something for my mood, such as an antidepressant or St John's wort?

Check with your clinic doctor/nurse or pharmacist before taking these St John's wort can reduce the levels of Harvoni within your body, meaning they may be less effective at suppressing the virus. We therefore advise not taking this; other antidepressants are safe to take and should be discussed with your nurse.

Currently take, or would like to take, supplements, including calcium or iron?

Most supplements can be taken with Harvoni, but always check with your clinic doctor/nurse or pharmacist before taking them.

Miss a dose

Treatment works best if there is a constant amount of the drugs in your body. It is really important that you take them regularly. However, occasionally you may forget a dose. Don't worry if this happens, just follow the guidance below. If you are having problems remembering to take your medicines, speak with your doctor or nurse and they may be able to help you.

Harvoni

If you miss a dose and notice within **18 hours** of the time you usually take it, you must take the tablet as soon as possible. Take the next dose at your usual time. If you miss a dose and you notice **18 hours** or more after the time you usually take Harvoni, wait and take the next dose at your usual time. Do not take a double dose (two doses together).

Ribavirin

Ribavirin should be taken as directed in the morning and evening. If you miss a dose and it is still possible to get at least an **8 hour** gap between doses, take the missed dose. If it is not possible to leave an **8 hour** gap between doses, you should not take the missed dose. Do not double-up subsequent doses.

Am sick after taking my medications

If you are sick (vomit) after taking Harvoni it may affect the amount of medication in your blood and make it work less well.

If you are sick (vomit) less than **5 hours** after taking Harvoni, take another tablet.

If you are sick (vomit) more than five hours after taking Harvoni, **WAIT** until your next scheduled tablet – there is no need to take an extra dose.

Get pregnant or my partner gets pregnant whilst on treatment

Contact the nurses as soon as possible who will advise you on the best course of action.

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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