

# Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin 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 your treatment, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## What does the treatment involve?

The treatment comprises of Sofosbuvir (brand name Sovaldi), Pegylated Interferon and 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?

**Sofosbuvir** - The recommended dose is one tablet (400mg) once a day **with food**. Swallow the tablet whole. Do not chew, crush or split the tablet as it has a bitter taste.

**Pegylated Interferon** – This is an injection given into your tummy, once a week. It should be taken on the same day each week. The nurses will teach you how to give yourself the injection. It must be stored in the fridge and then disposed of in a sharps bin afterwards.

**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?

There are no specific types or amounts of food that need to be taken with your tablets. You can take it with a substantial snack, with a main meal or up to 30 minutes after a main meal.

## What are the common side effects?

### Sofosbuvir

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

- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Diarrhoea
- Tiredness and trouble sleeping
- Headaches
- Changes in blood tests.

### Pegylated Interferon

- Flu like symptoms mainly fever, fatigue, aching joints, chills, nausea, headache and poor appetite
- Tiredness and feeling weak
- Mood changes including depression and irritability - some patients may require treatment with an anti-depressant during treatment
- Changes to your blood counts
- Redness or bruising at the injection site.

### 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 other medicines should I avoid with Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin?

It is always important to make your doctor and pharmacist aware of any medicines you take to ensure that they are compatible with your treatment. 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 Sofosbuvir or Ribavirin, however they should be kept in a safe place, away from children. Pegylated Interferon must be stored in a fridge.

## 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](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk) - 0800 652 7330

**Liver4Life** - [www.liver4life.org.uk](http://www.liver4life.org.uk) – 08000 743494

**Hepatitis C Trust** - [www.hepctrust.org.uk](http://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 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 Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin. 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 Hydroxyzine or Ceterizine can be taken with Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin. If your allergy is related to Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin 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 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?**

Antacids and over-the-counter heart burn remedies may be taken with Sofosbuvir, Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin.

### **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 Sofosbuvir 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 Pegylated Interferon, Sofosbuvir and Ribavirin, 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 the tablets 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 clinic now and they may be able to help you.

## Sofosbuvir

If you notice within **18 hours** of the time you usually take Sofosbuvir, you must take the tablet as soon as possible. Then take the next dose at your usual time.

If you notice **18 hours** or more after the time you usually take Sofosbuvir, wait and take the next dose at your usual time. Do not take a double dose (two doses close 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.

## Pegylated Interferon

If you forget to take your injection on the designated day, do not worry. Take it the following day. If it is more than one day late please call the nurses for advice.

## Am sick after taking my medications

If you are sick (vomit) after taking Sofosbuvir it may affect the amount of medication in your blood and make it work less well. If you are sick (vomit) less than **2 hours** after taking Sofosbuvir, take another tablet.

If you are sick (vomit) more than **2 hours** after taking Sofosbuvir, 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.

Ref number: 724.1

Publication Date: July 2016

Review Date: July 2018

