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Health newsfeed for Tuesday, February 11, 2014

HEADLINE: WORSE DISEASE

ANCHOR LEAD: IF YOU'RE INFECTED WITH HEPATITIS C, THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT AWAY, ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

Hepatitis C kills. That fact emerged from a recent CDC analysis of deaths due to this viral infection of the liver in the United States. But Mark Sulkowski, a hepatitis C expert at Johns Hopkins, says people can help themselves while they're being treated.

SULKOWSKI: We do know that there are some environmental factors that people can control. One is alcohol. We don't really think that there is a safe amount of alcohol that someone with hepatitis C can drink. The other thing that we're seeing is that obesity also plays a role. If you get fatty liver on top of hepatitis C that too can accelerate progression of disease. And then there's the fact that as we age everything gets a bit worse, and indeed the liver appears to be part of that, and the immune system is not quite as functional as it once was in younger years. :31

The CDC recommends screening for hepatitis C for all baby boomers. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.