

LIFESTYLES

Adjustments That We Make

A Parent's Perspective **Coping with a Hepatitis C Diagnosis**

By Anonymous Parent

I lived a kind of wild life when I was younger. Did drugs, slept around, you know. Anyway, when my husband and I got married, we decided to clean up our acts. We stopped the drugs and became vegans. We never went to the doctor. Our daughter Desiree was born at home. We never took her to the doctor, either. We lived such a healthy lifestyle that it never occurred to me that there could be anything wrong with her.

When she started getting severe stomach pains we decided to take her to the doctor and that's when we found out that she and I both had hepatitis C. I was blown away. We'd been living healthy for so long, it just couldn't be. But it was.

Anyway, we had never practiced universal (standard) precautions because we didn't think we needed to. But all of a sudden, we had to change our ways and fast. That was almost harder for us to deal with than discussing the disease itself. To Desiree, the disease was like an abstract concept. She didn't have to worry about medical treatments. She didn't have to spend a lot of time in the hospital. She understood that she had a disease but because she couldn't continuously see it or feel it, it almost didn't seem real.

The universal precautions, however, are real as it gets. She didn't like the fuss we made about her blood. She objected to having to wash her hands all of the time. It was a total pain.

We asked her doctor for help and he put us in contact with an older girl named Krista who also had a chronic hepatitis C virus infection. She started to act as Desiree's mentor. She and Desiree hit it off immediately. Desiree began practicing universal precautions as a way to please and copy Krista. Desiree's desire to impress her mentor was a stronger motivator than our nagging. I guess the doctor was right when he told us that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

