

Thresholds Health Literacy Center

Chronic Liver Disease and Liver Health

What Does Your Liver Do?

- The liver is an organ about the size of a football just under your right rib cage
- The liver is essential for digesting food and ridding your body of toxic substances
- Liver problems can also be caused by a variety of factors that damage the liver, such as viruses, alcohol use and obesity

Risk Factors of Liver Disease

- Family history of liver disease
- Heavy alcohol use
- Obesity
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Unclean tattoos/piercing shops
- Unprotected sex
- Blood transfusion before 1992
- Exposure to blood and body fluids
- Drug use with shared needles

What is Liver Disease?

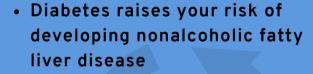
- · Liver disease refers to conditions that damage the liver
- Liver diseases can lead to scarring, also known as Cirrhosis
- Cirrhosis can lead to liver failure, a life threatening condition

Symptoms of Liver Disease



- · Abdominal pain and swelling
- Jaundice (yellowing eyes/skin)
- Swelling in the legs and ankles
- Itchy skin, or frequent bruising
- Dark urine color
- Pale stool color
- Chronic fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Liver Health and Diabetes



- · Liver disease raises your risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Once you have both conditions, poorly managed type 2 diabetes can make fatty liver disease worse

Liver Health and Serious Mental Illness



- Most new psychiatric mediations are safe for the liver, even if you're experiencing cirrhosis
- Benzodiazepines, however, can further complicate liver disease or liver failure
- If you have ever taken or are currently taking benzodiazepines, consult your medical provider on your liver health

Liver Health and Diabetes Management • Work with your health care team to

- manage blood sugar levels • Try to *maintain* a healthy weight set
- by you and your medical provider
- Reduce high blood pressure by:
 - limiting salt intake
 - managing stress
 - being physically activity
 - eating a balanced diet
- Control cholesterol
- Avoid alcohol consumption
- If you have diabetes, your doctor may recommend an ultrasound exam of your liver when you are first diagnosed and regular follow-up blood tests to monitor your liver function

Liver Health and COVID-19



- Older adults and people who have serious underlying medical conditions, including people with liver disease, might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19
- People with liver disease should take the same preventive actions being taken by people in the high risk category to avoid getting sick/spreading COVID-19
 - Preventative actions include:
 - washing hands
 - social distancing
 - avoid unnecessary travel
- wearing a mask in public • People with substance use disorder
- should stay in contact with their medical provider and continue treatments as prescribed



References/Citations