



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

- **Diabetes raises your risk of developing nonalcoholic fatty liver disease**
- **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 medications 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 active
 - 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**

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