



Non Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease



Mission Statement - The Community Liver Alliance is dedicated to supporting the community through liver disease awareness, prevention, education and research.

For more information please visit our website
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Non Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

Facts & Information
Preventive Measures
Treatment Options



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What is NAFLD?

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is the build up of extra fat in liver cells that is not caused by alcohol. It is normal for the liver to contain some fat. However, if more than 5% - 10% of the liver's weight is fat, then it is called a fatty liver (steatosis).



What is your liver and what does it do?

The liver is the second largest organ in your body and is located under your rib cage on the right side. It weighs about three pounds and is shaped like a football that is flat on one side.

The liver performs many jobs in your body. It processes what you eat and drink into energy and nutrients your body can use. The liver also removes harmful substances from your blood.

Who is likely to develop NAFLD?

NAFLD tends to develop in people who are overweight, obese, have diabetes or high triglycerides. Rapid weight loss and poor nutrition also may lead to NAFLD, even thin people can develop NAFLD. You should avoid a diet high in sugar, fructose and processed foods. However, some people develop NAFLD even if they do not have any risk factors.

What are the Risks of NAFLD?

NAFLD may cause the liver to swell (steatohepatitis). A swollen liver may cause scarring (cirrhosis) over time and may even lead to liver cancer or liver failure.

What Are the Symptoms of NAFLD?

NAFLD often has no symptoms.

When symptoms occur, they may include:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite/ Nausea
- Mental confusion

Symptoms become more severe when cirrhosis sets in and may include:

- Abdominal pain
- Spider-like blood vessels
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Itching
- Fluid build up and swelling of the legs (edema) and abdomen (ascites)

How is NAFLD Diagnosed?

NAFLD is initially suspected if blood tests show high levels of liver enzymes. However, other liver diseases are first ruled out through additional tests. Often, an ultrasound is used to confirm the NAFLD diagnosis.

Treatment Considerations

- See a doctor who specializes in the liver regularly
- Talk to your doctor about ways to improve your liver health
- Discuss with your physician how to safely lower your carbohydrate intake
- Lose weight, if you are overweight or obese
- Lower your triglycerides
- Minimize your intake of sugar, fructose and processed foods
- Control your diabetes
- Avoid alcohol, sugar sweetened beverages (including soda and fruit juice)



Can NAFLD be prevented?

There are ways to prevent NAFLD:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a healthy diet – eat real food
- Limit processed foods
- Limit added sugar to 9 teaspoons per day for men and 6 teaspoons per day for women
- Exercise regularly
- Limit alcohol intake
- Only take medicines that you need and follow dosing recommendations

What is NASH?

The more severe form of NAFLD is called non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). NASH causes the liver to swell and become damaged. NASH tends to develop in people who are:

- Overweight/ Obese
- Have diabetes
- Have high cholesterol
- Have high triglycerides

However, some people have NASH even if they do not have any risk factors. Important things to know about NASH are:

- Most common between the ages of 40 and 60 years
- More common in men than in women
- Often has no symptoms and people can have NASH for years before symptoms occur
- One of the leading causes of cirrhosis in adults in the United States
- Up to 25% of adults with NASH may have cirrhosis