

DIET AND LIVER HEALTH

The Diet/Liver Health Connection

How we eat can affect our overall health and our liver health. Eating an unhealthy diet can lead to obesity, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol which can lead to nonalcohol-related fatty liver (NAFLD). NAFLD is a condition in which excess fat builds up in the liver and, over time, can lead to liver inflammation and the development of scar tissue (fibrosis and cirrhosis).

Eating a healthy diet is also important for people who already have liver disease. A healthy diet that is lower in fat and higher in nutritional value benefits our health as well as the health of the liver. Eating nutritious foods in amounts that are within recommended daily servings and portions can help people avoid becoming overweight or obese.

What Kinds of Food Make Up a Healthy Diet?

Eating foods from all the food groups (grains, proteins, dairy, vegetables, fruits, and fats) are included as part of a healthy diet. It is also important to include fiber, such as whole grain breads, rice, and cereal. Whole grains have more nutritional value and are healthier choices than white bread and other processed products. A healthy diet is also lower in “junk foods” such as sweets, sugary beverages, foods with a lot of added salt, and unhealthy fats.

If you have a liver disease, there may be additional dietary guidelines you should follow. Speak to your liver specialist or a dietitian for guidance about your diet.

Is Alcohol Safe as Part of a Healthy Diet?

Alcohol is toxic to liver cells. The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher the risk for developing liver disease. Medical experts usually tell people who already have any form of liver disease to avoid alcohol because even small amounts can cause further liver damage.

Medicine and Liver Health

Medication includes prescription drugs and non-prescription drugs (also called “over the counter” medications). Vitamins and supplements are not “medicine”, yet people often take them with or without their doctors’ knowledge and approval. It is very important to read all directions before taking any medication to avoid potential liver or other organ damage. Acetaminophen is a compound in many medications. Taking too much acetaminophen can cause serious liver injury. It is best to avoid alcohol when on medication to avoid risk of liver damage.

To learn more about diet, medication and healthy lifestyle tips, scan the QR code below. For a complete list of our free resources, visit: liverfoundation.org/resource-center.

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For questions about liver wellness and disease, or for emotional support to patients at the point of crisis and information on local resources including physician referrals, please contact our Helpline at 1-800-465-4837.

