

How can alcohol and medicine affect the liver?

Alcohol

Alcohol can damage or destroy liver cells. Liver damage can lead to the build up of fat in your liver (fatty liver), inflammation or swelling of your liver (alcoholic hepatitis), and/or scarring of your liver (cirrhosis). For people with liver disease, even a small amount of alcohol can make the disease worse. Talk to your doctor about alcohol and your liver health.

Medicines

Different types of medicines are taken everyday including over-the-counter and prescription medicines, vitamins, dietary supplements, and alternative medicines. Medicines can help you feel better. However, when medicines are taken incorrectly — by taking too much or the wrong type or by mixing — your liver can be harmed.

- Learn about your medicines and how they can affect your liver
- Follow dosing instructions
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist often about all the medicines you are taking

Alcohol and Medicines

Mixing alcohol and medicines can be harmful even if they are not taken at the same time.



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Liver Wellness

Increasing Public Awareness
of Liver Health



Diet and Your Liver



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Why is the liver important?

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.

How does a healthy diet help the liver?

Eating a healthy diet helps the liver to do its functions well and to do them for a long time.

Eating an unhealthy diet can lead to liver disease. For example, a person who eats a lot of fatty foods is at higher risk of being overweight and having non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

For people who have liver disease, eating a healthy diet makes it easier for the liver to do its jobs and can help repair some liver damage. An unhealthy diet can make the liver work very hard and can cause more damage to it.

What does a healthy diet include?

- Eating foods from all the food groups: grains, proteins, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and fats
- Eating foods that have a lot of fiber such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, rice and cereals

Are there diet changes for those with liver disease?

It is important for people with liver disease to maintain a healthy weight by eating a balanced diet with foods from all food groups. Also,

- Do not eat uncooked shellfish such as oysters and clams
- Limit eating foods that have a lot of sugar or salt
- Limit eating fatty foods

▼ Liver Diseases and Diet

Some liver diseases have specific diet recommendations:

Bile Duct Disease

Bile is a liquid made in the liver that helps break down fats in the small intestine. Bile duct disease keeps bile from flowing to the small intestine.

Diet Recommendations:

- Use fat substitutes
- Use kernel oil (i.e. canola, olive, corn, sunflower, peanut, flax seed oils) because it needs less bile to break down fats than other types of oil

Cirrhosis

Cirrhosis is the scarring and hardening of the liver.

Diet Recommendations:

- Limit salt and foods that contain a lot of salt
- Talk to your doctor about how much protein to have in your diet

Fatty Liver Disease

Fatty liver disease is the build up of fat in liver cells.

Diet Recommendations:

- Limit foods that are high in calories
- Eat foods that have fiber

Hemochromatosis

Hemochromatosis is the build up of iron in the liver.

Diet Recommendations:

- Do not eat foods that have iron
- Do not use iron pots and pans
- Do not take pills with iron
- Do not eat uncooked shellfish

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus.

Diet Recommendations:

- Limit foods that have a lot of iron
- Do not use iron pots and pans
- Limit salt and foods that contain a lot of salt

Wilson Disease

Wilson disease is the build up of copper in the body.

Diet Recommendations:

- Limit foods that have copper such as chocolate, nuts, shellfish and mushrooms
- Do not use copper pots