

About Alcoholic Liver Disease



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What is alcoholic liver disease?

It is an inflammation of the liver which is caused by drinking too much alcohol over a period of many years. A person who drinks a lot of alcohol for years can get alcoholic liver disease without becoming drunk. Alcoholic liver disease is sometimes called alcoholic cirrhosis, or Laennec's cirrhosis. The inflamed liver becomes more and more damaged, and is not able to do its work. Brain damage can also happen when the disease becomes very bad.

What are the symptoms of alcoholic liver disease?

Some people do not have any symptoms until the disease has become quite bad. Symptoms can be worse after a bout of heavy drinking.

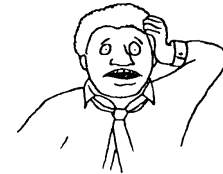
At first, you may have:

- Loss of appetite (not be as hungry as usual), and lose weight.
- A swollen belly (abdomen) full of liquid.
- A weight gain because of the liquid in your belly.
- Pain in your belly (abdomen).
- A yellow color to your skin and eyes.
- Fever.
- Feelings of tiredness.



As the disease gets worse, you may:

- Have trouble thinking, concentrating and remembering.
- Feel nervous and moody.
- Hear or see things that are not there (hallucinations).
- Vomit bloody, dark liquid that looks like coffee grounds.
- Have dark, tar-like bowel movements.
- Have skin that is lighter or darker than usual.
- Notice your hands or feet being more red than usual.
- Feel dizzy, and may faint (fall out).
- Have a very fast heartbeat, specially when you first stand up.
- become slow moving.
- If you are a man, you may notice that your breasts have gotten bigger.



How will my healthcare provider check if I have alcoholic liver disease?

Your healthcare provider may want to do some or all of these tests:

- Blood tests:
 - CBC (complete blood count).
 - Liver function tests.
- An ultrasound or CT scan of your belly (abdomen).
- A biopsy (a tiny bit of the liver is taken out to be checked).

How is alcoholic liver disease treated?

- The most important thing you can do is to stop drinking alcohol. Your liver is already damaged, and more alcohol will hurt it even more. It may help to have counseling or be in a rehabilitation program to help you stop drinking alcohol. You may find that going to a support group can help you stay away from drinking alcohol.

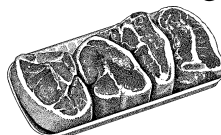
- You may need to eat **foods high in carbohydrates, such as:**

- Milk and yogurt.
- Beans such as navy, pinto, white and garbanzo beans (chick peas).
- Applesauce, grapes, dried dates, prunes and raisins.
- Potatoes and rice (both white and brown).



- You may need to eat foods that are high in vitamins, specially thiamine (vitamin B1) and folic acid. **Foods that have a lot of thiamine (vitamin B1) are:**

- Cereals that are whole wheat, whole grain or have added thiamine.
- Meat, specially pork.
- Fresh, raw vegetables.



Foods that have a lot of folic acid are:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables such as oranges, orange juice avocados, beets, cantaloupe.
- Dark green, leafy vegetables such as romaine lettuce, spinach and broccoli.
- Meat.
- Beans and nuts.
- Dairy foods such as milk, butter, yogurt, cheese, ice-cream.
- Breads and cereals that are whole wheat, whole grain or have added folic acid.

