



Information for
patients and
carers

**Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease
(NAFLD)**

Non- Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)

What is NAFLD?

1 in 5 people in the UK have NAFLD. NAFLD is a condition where too much fat accumulates in the liver. The liver should contain little or no fat at all. Too much fat in the liver can cause irritation and inflammation of the liver cells. Although the liver can repair itself, persistent inflammation can cause scarring. If this scarring becomes severe it can be irreversible and lead to Liver Cirrhosis, which can reduce your quality of life and life expectancy. The good news is that NAFLD can be reversed in the early stages with simple lifestyle changes; stopping the scarring process and preventing cirrhosis.

Why is this important?

The liver has many vital functions, which can become impaired by NAFLD/Cirrhosis. These functions include:

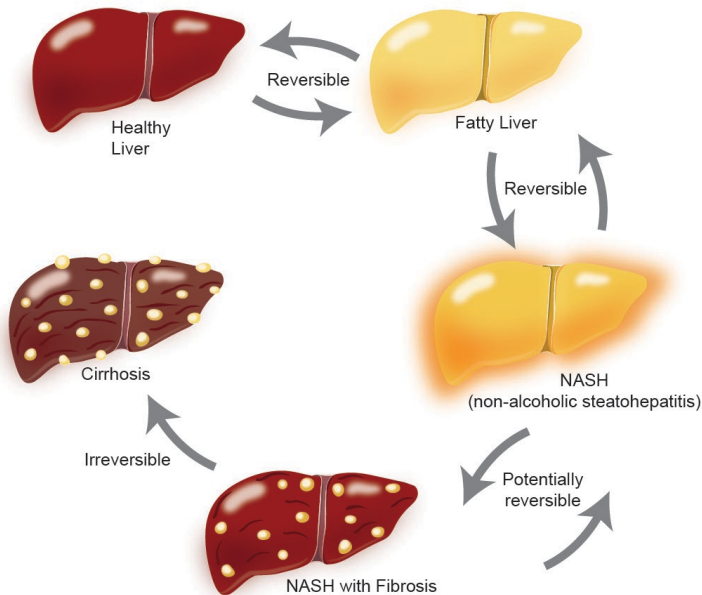
- Filtering and cleaning toxins/waste products from the blood
- Storing sugars, vitamins and minerals
- Producing substances vital for other organ functions e.g.
 - Cholesterol for hormone production
 - Bile to help you digest and absorb food
 - Proteins that help make up your blood

NAFLD may also increase your risk of other health issues, such as:

- Heart Attacks
- Strokes
- Cancer of the Liver

Stages of NAFLD

1. **Healthy Liver:** with little or no fat
2. **Fatty liver:** excessive fat builds up in the liver. At this stage there may be no inflammation or scarring unless it progresses and is reversible
3. **Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH):** The fatty build up in the liver starts to cause inflammation and can lead to scarring. This this is also reversible
4. **Liver Fibrosis:** The liver starts to stiffen and scar. Although this can be reversed, it is more difficult to improve at this stage
5. **Liver Cirrhosis:** the liver is so irreversibly scarred that it may not work as it should and can fail



What are the symptoms of NAFLD?

Most patients with NAFLD have no symptoms and are diagnosed based on blood tests or scans done for other reasons. A minority of patients do have some non-specific symptoms including:

- Dull or aching pains in the right upper part of the abdomen
- Extreme tiredness/lethargy
- Unexplained weight loss

In advanced cases symptoms may include:

- Jaundice- yellowing of the skin and eyes
- Itchy skin
- Swelling/fluid retention in the legs, ankles and abdomen

What causes NAFLD?

- Being overweight
- Poor diet and low levels of exercise
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Certain Medications

All of these causes can be controlled and improved with lifestyle changes and help from your doctor.

What do I need to do?

- **Gradually Lose Weight**
 - Losing as little as 5-10% of your body weight is proven to improve fatty liver
- **Exercise**
 - Try to exercise for at least 30 minutes per day. A brisk walk is the easiest way of doing this. Regular exercise can also improve a number of other health conditions.
- **Ask your GP to help control any related health issues such as Diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol**
 - Diet and exercise will help with these also but, in some cases, medication may be required.
- **Make changes to your diet**
 - Reduce your intake of fatty and sugary foods.
 - Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables (5 portions per day).
- **Stop smoking**
 - This will also reduce your risk of a number of other health problems.
- **Stop drinking alcohol**
 - Alcohol can cause further irritation and damage to the liver.
- **Always take the medications as prescribed by your doctor**
 - If you have any concerns about a medication then ask your doctor for advice.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact your GP.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site.

On 31 May 2017 Lancashire Teaching Hospitals became a smoke-free organisation. From that date smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Cantonese:

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

Gujarati:

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઇચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

Polish:

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

Urdu:

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

Department: Gastroenterology

Division: Medicine

Production date: August 2020

Review date: August 2023

JR529 v1