



hepatitis C BASICS

Fatty Liver

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When excess fat cells develop in the liver, this condition is called “fatty liver disease” or steatosis. More people with hepatitis C have fatty liver than people who do not have hepatitis C. The reason that people with hepatitis C have more fatty liver is not really understood. However, there seems to be a way that the hepatitis C virus makes it easier for people to get fatty liver.

What Causes Fatty Liver?

Fatty liver can be caused by many factors including:

- Eating too many foods and beverages that contain fat and sugars
- Not getting enough exercise
- Having more excess fat all over the body than is normal or healthy
- Having diabetes (a condition where the body can not process or control sugar)
- Drinking a lot of alcohol over a long period of time
- Having a certain strain or genotype of hepatitis C – genotype 3

Fatty liver is becoming one of the biggest causes of illness in people in the United States and around the world. Fatty liver can also lead to the liver being damaged. In people with hepatitis C, fatty liver can cause even more problems. In someone who has hepatitis C, a fatty liver will speed up the damage caused

by hepatitis C. Another problem with fatty liver in people who have hepatitis C is that the medications used to treat hepatitis C do not work as well compared to people who have hepatitis C and do not have fatty liver.

Genotype 3

For people with hepatitis C genotype 3 it is a different story. It is believed that this type or strain (genotype 3) of hepatitis C can actually cause fatty liver. The exact way the hepatitis C genotype 3 virus causes fatty liver is not really understood, but scientists have learned that people with hepatitis C genotype 3 who are able to rid their bodies of hepatitis C have a reduction and sometimes a complete reversal of fatty liver.

Treatment

At this time there are no medicines to treat fatty liver. But there is much research looking into drugs that are used to treat other illnesses and which may also work to treat fatty liver. Unfortunately, these drugs or any new drugs will probably not be available to treat fatty liver for many years.

The usual treatment for fatty liver is diet and exercise. Some simple tips to help reduce fatty liver include:

- Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, and meat (like chicken) that have little or no fat content. Cooked fish is another food that is low in ‘bad’ fat and very healthy to eat


- Exercise is also a good way to stay healthy and reduce fatty liver. Be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse to find out what would be a good exercise routine for you to follow. Always start out slow and increase the amount of exercise up to moderate levels. Some examples of good exercise include walking, dancing, swimming, lifting weights or anything that gets the body to move
- Stop drinking or cut down on alcohol

The best thing to do is talk with a doctor or nurse about ways to stay healthy and get advice from a person that specializes in diet and exercise.

Conclusion

It is clear that fatty liver can speed up the liver damage caused by hepatitis C. It is also clear that people with hepatitis C and fatty liver do not have as good a chance of getting rid of hepatitis C with HCV medications as someone without fatty liver. Current treatment of fatty liver consists of eating healthy meals, exercising, and avoiding alcohol or anything else that can harm the liver. In addition to helping to reduce or stop fatty liver from getting worse, these types of treatment for fatty liver can improve the overall health of someone with hepatitis C and help the way the body fights hepatitis C.

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