

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF LIVER FAILURE INCLUDE:

- Increased tiredness and inability to carry out your usual activities.
- A build-up of fluid in the feet and lower legs (odema) and/or in the abdomen (ascites).
- Bruising and bleeding (because of low numbers of platelets and lack of clotting proteins in the blood).
- Loss of mental sharpness and eventually onset of confusion (encephalopathy).
- Interrupted sleep patterns.
- Yellowing of the whites of the eyes and skin (jaundice) and darkening of the urine.
- Black bowel motions or vomiting blood, from bleeding into the gut.
- Loss of muscle bulk, especially around the shoulders and neck (protein-calorie malnutrition).

LIVER CANCER

Cirrhosis can lead to liver cancer (also called hepatocellular carcinoma, HCC, or hepatoma). Unlike liver failure, liver cancer does not cause symptoms until very late; at this stage, it is usually not curable.

For this reason, every person with cirrhosis should have regular screening with a Liver ultrasound and blood test at least 6 monthly, to try and detect liver cancer at an early and curable stage

IS TREATMENT AVAILABLE?

In patients with chronic hepatitis B, with active liver disease, safe and effective anti-viral medications (one tablet per day) are available and fully funded. These medications help to prevent cirrhosis. They will also aid in the prevention of liver failure and liver cancer in patients who already have cirrhosis.

Nearly all people with hepatitis C can be cured with current treatment. Once cured living a healthy lifestyle will prevent further liver damage.

Find out more
hepatitisfoundation.org.nz



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Cirrhosis and Chronic Hepatitis 2024



**The Hepatitis
Foundation
of New Zealand**

Cirrhosis and chronic hepatitis Scarring of the liver

Hepatitis B, help, care and support
Hepatitis B āwhina, tiaki me te tautoko

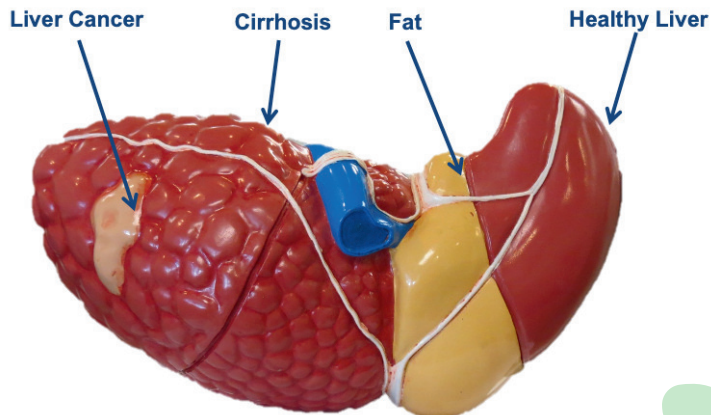


WHAT IS CIRRHOSIS?

Chronic hepatitis can cause cirrhosis of the liver. Cirrhosis is a result of advanced scarring that results from persistent injury to the liver, usually from a chronic viral infection especially chronic hepatitis.

Liver scarring is usually a slow process and happens over several years, more rapidly if there are more than one cause of damage such as other types of hepatitis, alcohol or too much fat in the liver.

This scar tissue reduces the blood flow through the liver, causing increase in pressure in the veins which may cause severe bleeding in the gut. Cirrhosis can also lead to liver failure or liver cancer.



WHY IS THE LIVER IMPORTANT?

The liver is an extremely important organ in the body that has many functions essential for life and growth.

These include: Producing proteins, which build muscle, fights infection, stores fats, essential to help our cells remain healthy, processes food and aids in digestion and blood clotting. It filters alcohol and other toxic substances and excretes these from the body. The liver can also repair itself.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Early Cirrhosis has no major symptoms (Compensated Cirrhosis).

Later stage Cirrhosis may include a loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, nausea, abdominal swelling and the inability to tolerate fatty foods. (Decompensated Cirrhosis).

WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CIRRHOSIS?

EARLY STAGES

The liver function is normal – this is called compensated cirrhosis. However, bleeding complications can still occur.

LATE STAGES

The liver function is abnormal and signs of liver failure will develop. This is called decompensated cirrhosis. Often the onset of decompensated cirrhosis is due to a sudden event such as an infection, bleeding, or a new medication. With treatment, the liver function may return to a compensated state.

WHAT CAUSES CIRRHOSIS TO PROGRESS?

Cirrhosis is the end-stage of many types of chronic liver disease. Heavy alcohol (>2 standard drinks per day) and being overweight increase the progression to cirrhosis.

WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS?

LIVER FAILURE

In a patient with compensated cirrhosis, the progression of the liver disease may lead to deterioration of liver function and the onset of liver failure (decompensated cirrhosis).