

# ***Fatty Liver Disease***

## **What is Non-Alcohol Related Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)?**

This is the name given to a condition in which you have too much fat in your liver. There should be little or no fat in a healthy liver. Too much fat in your liver is caused by the build-up of fats. We get fats from our diet. They can also be made in the liver from sugars and proteins.

## **How common is NAFLD?**

The more overweight you are, the more chance there is that you may have the condition. It is estimated that nearly one in five people (20%) in the India are in the early stages of the condition.

## **What are the causes of NAFLD?**

Common risk factors are obesity, lack of physical exercise, insulin resistance, and other features of metabolic syndrome

People most at risk are those who:

- are overweight or obese
- have a poor diet and do little or no exercise
- smoke
- have diabetes/ hypertension (high blood pressure)/ hyperlipidaemia (too much cholesterol and triglyceride in their blood)
- have hepatitis B/C
- are taking certain drugs prescribed for other conditions

It is likely there are other factors which contribute to the disease as not everyone with NAFLD exhibits these risk factors.

## **How does NAFLD affect my liver?**

NAFLD is characterized by the build-up of excess fat in the liver of people who do not drink significant alcohol. The first stage is fatty liver, or steatosis. This is where fat accumulates in the liver cells without any inflammation or scarring. For many people, the condition will not advance and a serious liver condition will not develop, but for some, NAFLD can progress to NASH. NASH is a more significant condition, as it may cause scarring to the liver and can progress to cirrhosis. Cirrhosis causes irreversible damage to the liver and is the most severe stage of NAFLD.

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## **What are the symptoms?**

Most people with mild NAFLD are unlikely to notice any symptoms. It is usually diagnosed on routine screening. However, some people may experience some fatigability and discomfort in the abdomen.

## **How will it progress?**

It may be easiest to think of NAFLD as having the following stages:

1. Non-alcohol related fatty liver (NAFL) or steatosis - Has a good prognosis. Cirrhosis develops in 1-2% over 20 years.
2. Non-alcohol related steatohepatitis (NASH) - 10-12% of patients will progress to cirrhosis within eight years.
3. NASH with fibrosis
4. Cirrhosis

## **Can I prevent it?**

Maintaining a healthy weight through eating a well-balanced diet and taking regular exercise is the best way to prevent NAFLD. People with NAFLD who go on to develop Cirrhosis are at a higher risk of liver failure. Better control of existing medical conditions, such as glucose levels in diabetes, can also help prevent the development of NAFLD and NASH.

## **How can I treat it?**

### **Diet**

- Gradual weight loss is important (approximately 0.5 kg per week).
- Diets should have a high protein: calorie ratio.
- A typical low-fat diabetes-type diet is recommended.
- Abstinence from alcohol is recommended for all types of steatosis and steatohepatitis.

### **Exercise**

- Exercise with diet increases muscle mass and increases insulin sensitivity.
- Improving cardiovascular fitness and weight training should improve NASH.

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## **Avoid/Reduce intake**

- Fried food, butter, cheese, readymade food, packed and tinned foods, fast food, coconut, aerated drinks and readymade fruit juices
- Avoid fructose rich fruits
- Sugar consumption, sweets, chocolates
- Sugar in tea/coffee
- Extra chapattis/rice
- Few large meals- high calorie diets
- Alcohol
- Smoking and tobacco in all forms
- Painkillers – Combiflam, Nise, Meftal, voveran, ibugesic, brufen.

## **Take/Increase intake**

- Leafy vegetables,
- Salads
- Low fructose fruits
- Yoghurt
- Black coffee
- Seafood
- Garlic
- Protein rich foods
- Multiple small meals
- Nuts

**Vaccinate yourself against Hepatitis B**

**Exercise regularly – 30 mins per day, atleast 5 days a week**