



CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE NEWS

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Understanding Liver Disease

A Killer Without Symptoms

When a person is diagnosed with chronic liver disease, you, the caregiver, will have to know and understand how the disease needs to be treated and what level of care is required. The level of care needed for someone with end-stage liver disease varies. The job can be as simple as making sure that the person follows up with the doctor, is on time for his appointments, helps the person in care make decisions, offer psychological support, etc. Or it can be as involved as giving physical care such as assisting with bathing, walking, etc.

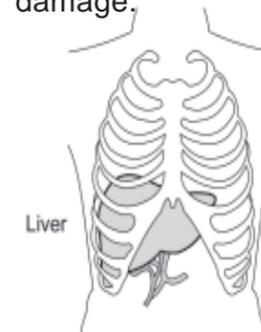
Another example of care needed would be to closely watch or monitor the person's daily salt intake to avoid edema (swelling). Also you may need to *titrate* (measure) lactulose (a type of sugar that acts as a laxative) depending on his bowel movements and mental status (ability to think clearly).

Part of reducing caregiver stress is to understand the condition and the effects it will have on the lifestyle of both you and the person in your care. It is also important to know from the beginning that you have to find ways to take care of yourself. Maybe it's a walk in while the person in your care is napping, or do 10 minutes of yoga after he goes to bed. Whatever it is, do something for yourself every day, even if it is just for a short time.

Love Your Liver

The liver is the largest internal solid organ in the human body. It is located on the right side of the abdomen, just under the rib cage. It helps with digestion, blood clotting, and control of blood glucose (sugar level in the blood). It stores vitamins and minerals. Its major job is the removal of toxic (poisonous) substances and detoxification (cleansing) of poisonous substances, such as alcohol, from the body. Think of the liver as a filter for all the good and bad things we eat and drink.

Most liver diseases do not have any symptoms, but can lead to *cirrhosis* (hardening of the liver from scar tissue) and *liver failure* if not treated properly. Because the liver has an amazing ability to regenerate (regrow), it can withstand injuries or abuse from an unhealthy lifestyle for many years, sometimes even decades. The good news is, if found early, most diseases can be controlled to prevent significant liver damage.



You are at risk for liver damage or disease if you:

- Are exposed to **blood or bodily fluids** on the job.
- Are **regularly exposed to toxins** or chemicals such as aerosol cleaners, bug spray, paint fumes and tobacco smoke.
- Have **injected drugs**, especially if you shared a needle.
- Have had **frequent, unprotected sex** with multiple partners.
- Have had a **tattoo or piercing** with an unsterile needle.
- **Consume alcohol**. Even moderate amounts of alcohol can have toxic effects, especially when taken with over-the-counter drugs containing acetaminophen.
- Use certain herbs or mega doses of vitamins.
- Have conditions such as **obesity, diabetes, or high triglycerides**.
- Received a **blood transfusion before 1992** and may be at risk for hepatitis C.
- Are a **military veteran**, especially a Vietnam-era veteran who was exposed to someone else's blood.
- Have ever had an **abnormal liver function test**.

If you can answer *yes* to any of the statements above, you should see your doctor and ask for a liver enzyme test. It's painless, and most importantly, it's dangerous to wait.

Source: Adapted with permission from the American Liver Foundation

NEXT ISSUE . . . LIVER DISEASE - BREATHE EASIER

The Ombudsman program can handle your concerns about areas such as elder abuse, client care, consumer rights, etc. For more information, call 1-800-582-7277.

For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medicaid fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.

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Some liver diseases are contagious some are hereditary (passed on genetically). Therefore it is important for the caregiver to be aware of the liver diagnosis. You, as caregiver should make sure that you are tested for any hereditary liver disease if you are related to the patient. You should make sure that the person in your care follows the appropriate steps to take care of himself.

Source: The Comfort of Home for Chronic Liver Disease

Food Poisoning Danger

Some uncooked and unpasteurized foods pose a risk of food poisoning, which is especially dangerous for people with compromised immunity, and those with liver disease.

October is Liver Awareness Month The liver is a vital organ – no one can survive without it, but it is a silent organ because it can be damaged without sending any signals or symptoms.

Alcohol Consumption

For many people, moderate drinking is probably safe. It may even have health benefit, including reducing your risk of certain heart problems. Moderate drinking is one drink a day for women or anyone over 65, and two drinks a day for men under 65.

A standard drink, is 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor, which all contain approximately the same amount of pure alcohol.

If you have questions about whether it is safe for you to drink, speak with your healthcare provider.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FAST FACTS

Liver disease in America:

- More than 30 million people in the U.S. have liver disease or 1 in 10 Americans—more than the combined populations of the 15 largest cities in America.
- Liver diseases such as hepatitis C, fatty liver disease, and liver cancer are on the rise
- Up to 25% of Americans may have fatty liver disease
- Four million Americans are infected with hepatitis C and more than 1 million Americans are infected with hepatitis B
- Approximately 15,000 children are hospitalized every year with pediatric liver disease or disorders.

The American Liver Foundation (ALF) is the nation’s leading nonprofit organization promoting liver health and disease prevention. ALF facilitates, advocates and promotes education, support and research for the prevention, treatment and cure of liver disease.

For more information, visit www.liverfoundation.org or call 1-800-GO-LIVER. (800-465-4837).

Source: American Liver Foundation

Taking Care of Yourself **Warning Signs of Breast Cancer**

Not all breast cancer is found through mammography. The most common symptoms of breast cancer are a change in the look or feel of the breast, a change in the look or feel of the nipple and nipple discharge. Look for:

- ✓ Lump, hard knot or thickening
- ✓ Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening
- ✓ Change in the size or shape of the breast
- ✓ Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- ✓ Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- ✓ Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
- ✓ Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- ✓ New pain in one spot that doesn’t go away



If you have any of these symptoms, you should discuss them with your health care provider right away. Although for most people these changes will turn out to be benign (not cancer), the only way to know for sure is to see your provider.

October is **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month**. Take control of your breast health by practicing regular self-breast examinations, getting mammograms as recommended, scheduling regular visits with your physician for breast care, and learning about breast health.

Source: Susan G. Komen for the Cure® www.komen.org; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Live Life Laughing!

Doc, I’m willing to make some lifestyle changes as long as I don’t have to do anything different.



Inspiration

Do not judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.
~ Robert Louis Stevenson

Note – Tylenol Safety

Tylenol is known to be toxic to the liver at high doses. However, it is important to understand that it only causes liver failure when more than the *recommended daily dose* is taken. Tylenol is considered safe, even in patients with liver disease, as long as it is taken only as directed and in appropriate doses.

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