

This article is a supplement to discussions with your health-care provider and addresses only non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Fatty liver or metabolic dysfunction associated steatotic liver disease is a condition where fat builds up in the liver. This can cause inflammation and other complications. Many people are asymptomatic, however, for those who do experience symptoms the most common are abdominal discomfort and feeling tired.

The exact cause of why some people acquire fatty liver or its symptoms, and others do not is not known, but known contributing factors are:

- Excess bodyweight
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol/triglycerides
- High blood pressure

Potential complications of fatty liver include cirrhosis, which is scar liver and can cause fatigue, edema, and difficulty breathing. Some cases can progress to liver carcinoma, or liver failure.

Because there's not a direct treatment for this condition, treatment is aimed toward treating contributing factors or diseases, (diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, weight loss).

The Mediterranean Diet has been shown to be beneficial for those who suffer from fatty liver disease because it is rich in healthy fats, plant-based foods, and low in refined sugar and red meat.

Follow-up care includes annual monitoring of your liver function, labs and possible repeat imaging of your liver every 2 to 4 years, or sooner if metabolic factors are not controlled.

Following are diet recommendations that have been shown to reverse and or prevent the progression of nonalcoholic fatty-liver.

Healthy Fats

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Found in fatty fish (like salmon, mackerel, and sardines), flaxseeds, and walnuts.

Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated Fats: Olive oil, avocados, egg, oily fish, nuts, cheese, nut butters, and natural yogurts are good sources.

Avoid fried foods, high-fat meats (like bacon and sausage), and processed foods containing trans fats.

Lean Proteins:

Opt for fish, skinless poultry, beans, legumes, and low-fat dairy products.

Reduce Sugar Intake

Limit foods and drinks high in added sugars, such as sugary beverages, candies, baked goods, and some breakfast cereals. Be mindful of natural sugars in fruit juices and dried fruits.

Opt for complex carbohydrates with a low glycemic index (GI), such as whole grains and legumes, to avoid rapid spikes in blood sugar.

Limit or avoid alcohol entirely, as it can contribute to liver damage.

Fruits and Vegetables:

Aim for a variety of colors and types. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Hydration:

Aim for at least 2-3 liters of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.

Portion Control: Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating.

Specific Foods to Include:

Green Tea: May help improve liver enzyme levels and reduce oxidative stress and fat buildup.

Coffee: Studies suggest that coffee drinkers with fatty liver disease have less liver damage.

Garlic: Can help reduce body weight and fat in people with fatty liver.

Nuts: Good for liver health due to their healthy fats and antioxidants.

Leafy Greens: Spinach, kale, and other leafy greens can help reduce fat accumulation in the liver.

Lifestyle Changes:

Regular Exercise: Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.

Weight Management: Losing weight toward your ideal body weight can significantly reduce liver fat.