

Independence from liver disease

Liver is the largest solid organ in our body. It weighs around 1.3 to 1.5 kg. This is one of the most vital organs. Liver does more than 500 vital functions to maintain the metabolism in our body. At the same time, liver is the most neglected vital organ. Reason is, most of the liver diseases in early stage are completely asymptomatic. We must care our liver like any other vital organs. If we don't care our liver, we may land up into deep trouble. As per recent study published, approximately 3 per cent of total deaths in India is because of chronic liver disease which is very significant.

How to take care of our liver?

It's very important to understand common and preventable liver problems. Common liver problems in our society are Viral Hepatitis, Alcoholic liver disease and Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which is also called NAFLD. All these problems may land up into liver transplant if they are not prevented or timely managed. Fortunately, these common liver problems are either preventable or manageable if they are diagnosed in early stage.

Viral hepatitis is caused by Hepatitis A, B, C, D & E, out of which A and E typically cause acute infection whereas Hepatitis B and C can cause both acute and chronic infection. Acute viral hepatitis if can't be managed medically, patient needs urgent liver transplant. Hepatitis A and E spread by ingestion of contaminated water. Hepatitis B is transmitted by exposure of contaminated blood, semen or other body fluids whereas Hepatitis C is transmitted by exposure to infective blood and blood products. Hepatitis A and B can be prevented by vaccination whereas no vaccine available for hepatitis C. It's very important for everyone to avoid contact with contaminated blood and other body fluids. Drinking water should be clean.

Alcohol ingestion can affect our liver in many ways. It can cause fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis as well as cirrhosis of liver. Alcoholic hepatitis can occur even after having small amount of alcohol or you do binge drinking (consumption of large quantity of alcohol in short period of time), if patient is having other risk factors. Usually alcohol related chronic liver disease occurs in patients who consume alcohol daily for long period of time. If severe alcoholic hepatitis and chronic liver disease patients cannot be managed medically they need liver transplant. We should avoid alcohol consumption in moderate amount. Ideally, we should stop alcohol consumption which is the only certain way to prevent alcoholic hepatitis.



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Incidence of fatty liver related hepatitis which is also called NASH (Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis), is rapidly rising. Reason for this is, our unhealthy dietary pattern and sedentary lifestyle. If NASH is not managed on time, it may progress into liver cirrhosis which is irreversible, and patient may need liver transplant in future. Risk factors for developing fatty liver and NASH are diabetes, obesity, deranged lipid profile, metabolic syndrome and hypertension.

Prevention is always better than the cure. Regular exercise, weight reduction and dietary management are major factor in the treatment of fatty liver and NASH. Patients with fatty liver or NASH should have low-caloric Mediterranean diet which includes high consumption of vegetables and moderate consumption of protein. They should also evaluate for other risk factors. If they have deranged lipid profile, thyroid profile, it should be managed medically. Fatty liver and NASH patients should not smoke and abstain from alcohol. If patients with fatty liver have raised liver enzymes in their blood test they should immediately consult to nearby gastroenterologist or hepatologist.

Independence from liver diseases will happen only when we take care of our liver properly. Liver function tests and ultrasound abdomen must be included in our annual health check-up. Regular exercise, healthy diet is very important to keep your liver healthy. We should not take fatty liver lightly.

If you have any symptoms related with liver disease, you should consult liver specialist immediately.