

A Guide to Understanding Cirrhosis



Liver Foundation acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians of this land.

We pay our respects to Elders past,
present and emerging.

What is in this booklet?

How to use this booklet	2
What is cirrhosis?	5
Things that make you more likely to get cirrhosis	6
How do I know I have cirrhosis?	8
What to do next	9
Healthy living for my liver	11
How do I take care of my liver?	11
Eating	12
Staying active	13
Stop drinking alcohol	14
Medications	14
My notes	15
Contact us	18



How to use this booklet

Knowing you have cirrhosis can feel scary.

Many people feel upset, angry or confused.

It is ok to feel this way.

You are not alone. We are here to help.

You can talk to:

- Your GP
- Your specialist
- A nurse from the Liver Foundation Support Line.

It is free and private.

You can:

- Ask questions
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you
- Ask for an interpreter

These are your rights

**You are not alone.
We are here to help.**



IMPORTANT WORDS TO KNOW

They will help you read this booklet.

Cirrhosis	This means your liver has become hard and lumpy from scarring. The scarring stops your liver from working well.
Fibroscan	Fibroscan is a scan that checks how much scarring and fat is in the liver.
Biopsy	Biopsy is where a doctor takes a small piece of liver tissue to test.
Ultrasound	Ultrasound is a scan that uses sound waves to take pictures inside the body.
Toxins	Toxins are bad chemicals that come from breaking down food and drink, or from having alcohol or drugs. A healthy liver helps remove toxins from your body.

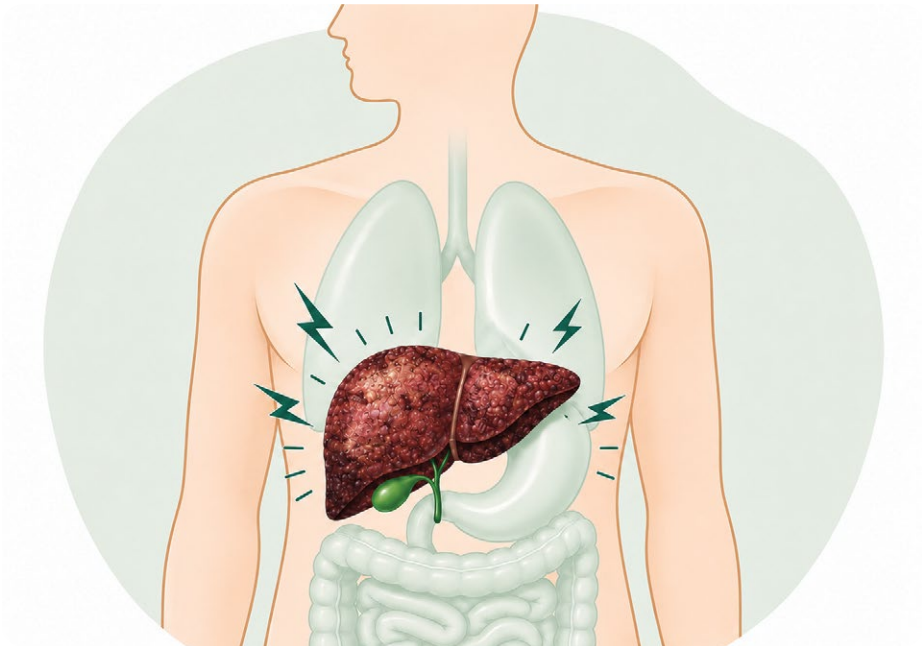
WHEN TO GET MEDICAL HELP FAST?



Call **000** now

or go to the **Emergency Department** now if you:

- Vomit blood
- Do black, sticky poo
- See blood in your poo
- Have a high fever
- Have strong pain in your belly
- Feel confused
- Feel very sleepy or are hard to wake



What is cirrhosis?

Cirrhosis means scarring of the liver.

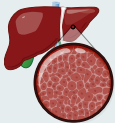
It happens after a long time of liver damage.

- A healthy liver is smooth and soft.
- The liver can fix itself many times, but if there is too much damage, the liver cannot fix itself anymore.
- It can become hard and lumpy.

With cirrhosis, the liver cannot work well.

You may start to get sick.

HOW LIVER PROBLEMS PROGRESS OVER TIME



Healthy Liver
Healthy liver cells



Fatty Liver
Fatty liver is too much fat building up in the liver.



Fibrosis
Fibrosis is where scar tissue replaces normal liver tissue.



Cirrhosis
Cirrhosis is when the liver becomes very scarred.

Things that make you more likely to get cirrhosis

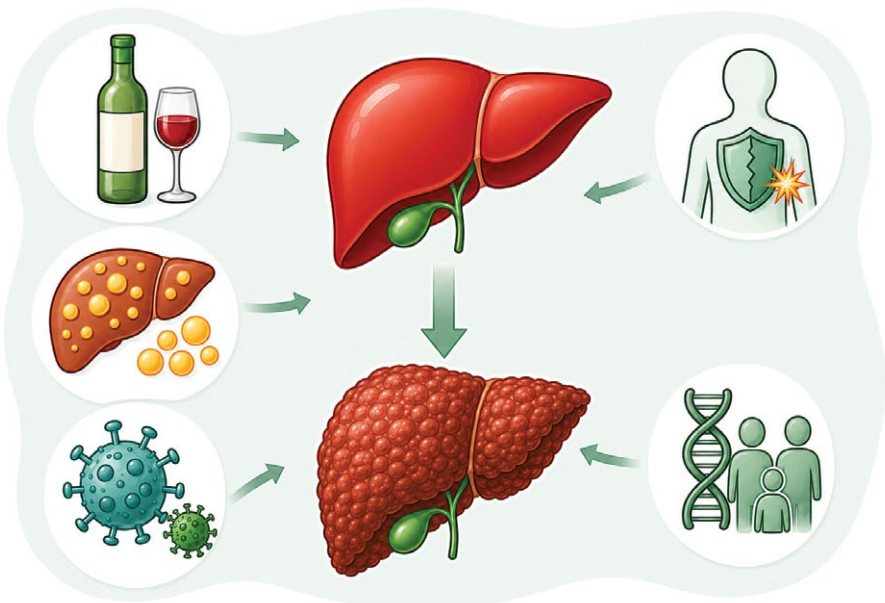
About 1 in 200 people in Australia have cirrhosis.

Cirrhosis can happen after the liver has been damaged for a long time.

This can be from:

Lifestyle and health

- Drinking too much alcohol
- Fatty liver disease
- Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or being overweight



Infections

- Hepatitis B or hepatitis C - If you think you have been exposed, talk to your GP about a test.
- Some people get hepatitis B at birth. This is more common in Sub Saharan Africa, the Western Pacific and South East Asia.

Your body and family

- When the body's immune system attacks itself
- Liver problems that run in families

Medicines, supplements and toxins

- Exposure to toxins over a long time
- A severe reaction to some medicines or supplements

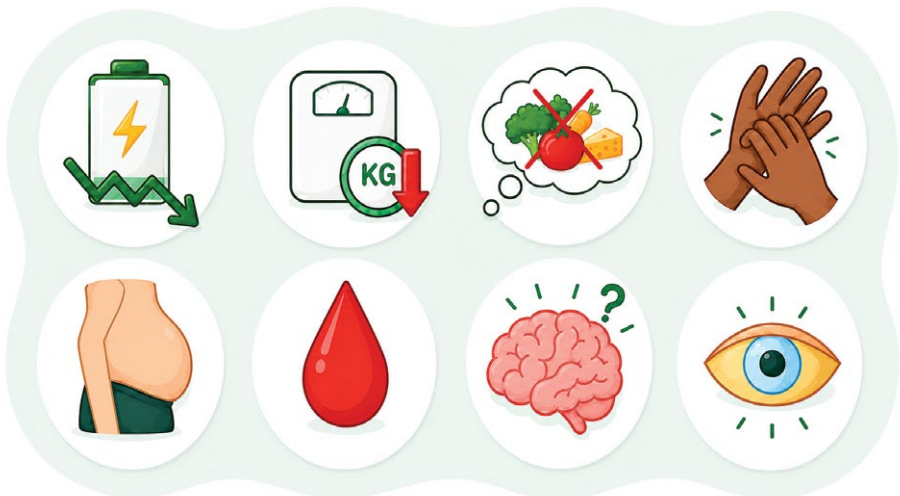
How do I know I have liver cirrhosis?

Some people have no symptoms at the beginning.

Cirrhosis may be found on a blood test or scan.

Symptoms can include:

- Feeling tired or having low energy
- Feeling sick (nausea) or not hungry
- Itchy skin
- Pain or discomfort in the upper right belly
- Yellow eyes or yellow skin (jaundice)
- Swollen belly from fluid
- Vomiting blood or black, sticky poo



What to do next

Your doctor may order blood tests and scans.

This might be an ultrasound or a Fibroscan.

Sometimes you may need a biopsy.

Cirrhosis can increase your risk of liver cancer.

But if you follow your doctor's advice, you can still live well.

If you have cirrhosis, it is important to:

- 1 See a liver specialist.
- 2 Have an ultrasound every 6 months to check for liver cancer.
Finding cancer early can help treatment work better.
- 3 Don't use alcohol, even in cooking.
- 4 Eat healthy food and get enough protein.
Ask your doctor what is good for you.
Do not add salt when cooking or at the table.
- 5 Manage diabetes and other health problems.
- 6 Take your medicines exactly as your doctor asks you.

What to do next

- 7 Check with your doctor before you take supplements or herbal medicines.
- 8 See your doctor regularly.
Get your blood tests and scans.



Healthy living for my liver

New health information can be hard to understand.

It is ok to go slowly and ask questions.

You do not need to do everything at once.

Start with one small step.

How do I take care of my liver?

Easy steps:

- Drink water during the day
- Eat more vegetables and fruit
- Go for a short walk
- Move your body for a few minutes
- Go to your appointments
- Call the Support Line and ask one question



Eating

Pick foods that you like and are low cost.

- Try not to skip any meals
- Eat protein at every meal
- Eat less takeaways, chips and cakes
- Drink less juice and soft drink

If you feel sick, not hungry or stressed:

- Eat small snacks every 2 to 3 hours
- Choose soft foods, like soup, yoghurt or smoothies
- Ask your doctor or dietitian for help

MORE INFORMATION



Scan the QR code to learn more about Cirrhosis.



Staying active

Staying active is good for your whole body.

It is also good for your liver.

- Being active can help you:
- Stay healthy
- Reduce the chance of diabetes and heart problems
- Improve your mental health
- Keep you strong

Being active is good for you.

Start slowly.

Be active every day.

Staying active means things that:

- Make you a little short of breath
- Help keep your muscles strong, like squats

See your doctor before you start new exercise



Stop drinking alcohol

If you have cirrhosis or advanced liver disease, do not drink alcohol.

If stopping alcohol feels hard, you are not alone.

Talk to your doctor.

You can also call the Support Line for help.



Medications

It is important to take the medications your doctor gives you.

Talk to your doctor if you are worried.

Always check with your doctor before taking:

- Supplements
- Herbal medicine
- Over the counter medications

This is important because some things can make liver problems worse.



My notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



My notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

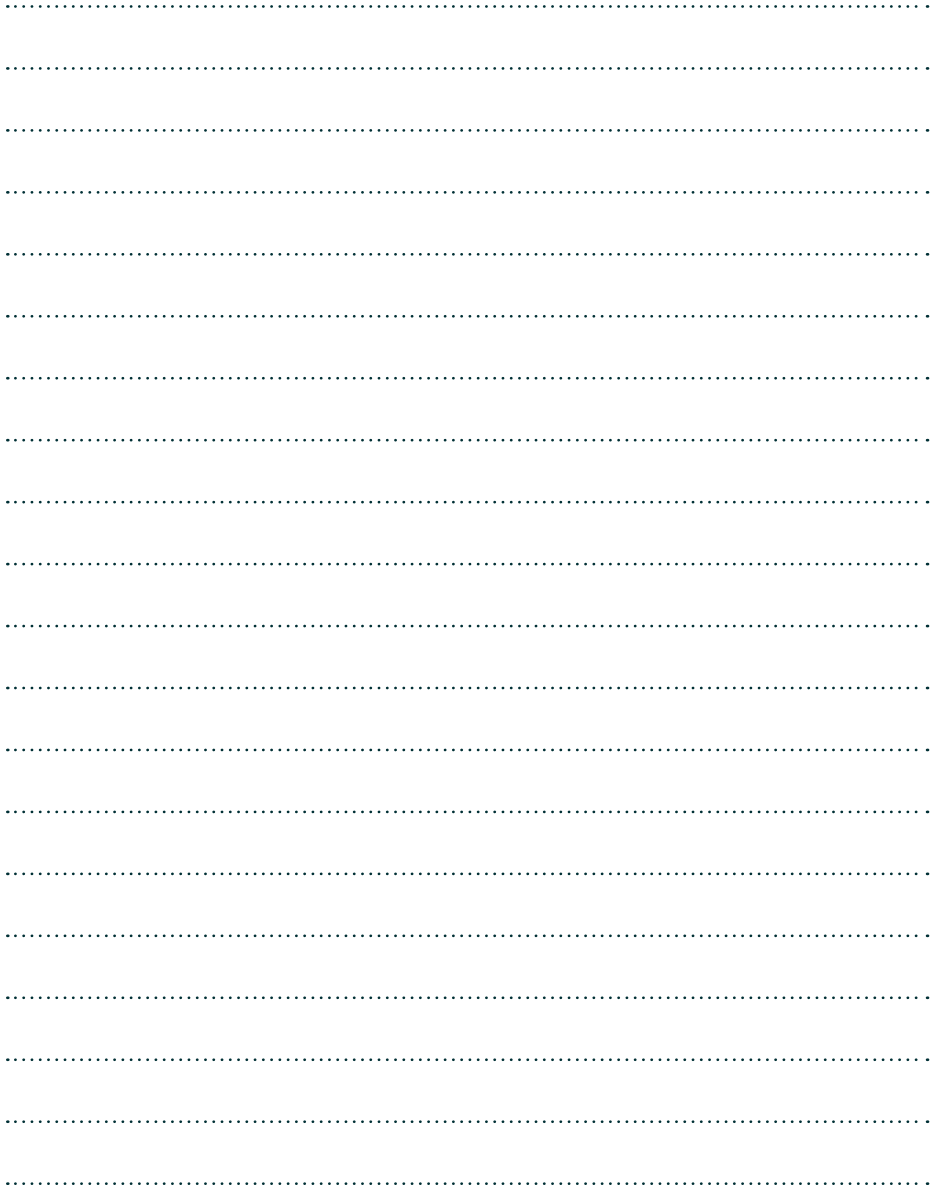
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Contact us

If you have questions about liver cancer or liver problems, you can call our Support Line.

You will speak to a liver nurse.

The nurse is caring and knows a lot about the liver.

The Support Line is:

- **Free and private.**

You do not have to give your name.

It's for people in Australia:

- Patients
 - Families
 - Carers
 - Health workers
-
- Open on weekdays 8am to 6pm
 - Closed on weekends and public holidays



Contact us

- You can talk to a nurse who knows a lot about liver problems

- Phone: 1800 841 118



- Email support@liver.org.au

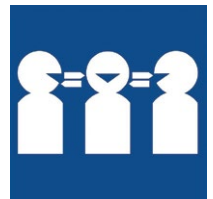


- You can ask for an Interpreter or Auslan.

- Call TIS National 131 450.

Tell them you want to speak to the

Liver Foundation Support Line at 1800 841 118.



MORE INFORMATION



Scan the QR code to learn more about Nurse-Led Support.

What is Liver Foundation?

Liver Foundation is an Australian organisation and we:

- Teach people about liver health
- Promote early testing and awareness of risk factors
- Support research
- Help people get care

The Liver Cancer Nurse Led Support Line:

- Is run by liver nurses
- Is funded by the Australian Government

The Support Line helps people with cancer and cirrhosis.

It helps people understand the health system.



[liver.org.au/languages/
easy-english](https://liver.org.au/languages/easy-english)