

A Guide to Understanding Fatty Liver Disease



Liver Foundation acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians of this land.

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

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How to use this booklet

Hearing you have fatty liver can be worrying.

This is because you may have no signs of it.

Many people feel like this.

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

IMPORTANT WORDS TO KNOW

They will help you read this booklet.

Fatty liver	Fatty liver means you have too much fat in your liver cells.
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.
Ultrasound	This is a scan that uses sound waves to take pictures of the inside of your body.
Metabolic syndrome	Metabolic syndrome means you have a few health problems, like: • High blood pressure • High blood sugar • High cholesterol • Extra fat around the belly These problems can make fatty liver more likely.

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 fatty liver disease?

Fatty liver is when too much fat builds up in the liver.

This fat builds up in liver cells.

All livers have some fat.

If fat is more than 5 to 10% of the liver, it is called fatty liver.

Fatty liver disease is also called Metabolic Associated Fatty liver Disease or MAFLD - this may be a term your doctor uses.

What is fatty liver disease?

You may have no signs of fatty liver at first.

But it can slowly get worse over time.

Your liver can become swollen which can cause some discomfort.

Ongoing damage from fatty liver can cause scars to form.

This could lead to cirrhosis.

It may also increase the risk of liver cancer.

People with fatty liver disease may not get cirrhosis.

But they can get other problems, like:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Cancer

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



Why does fatty liver happen?

Anyone can get a fatty liver.

It can happen for more than 1 reason.

Fatty liver can happen if you:

- Drink too much alcohol
- Live with overweight or obesity
- Have high sugar in your blood
- Have type 2 diabetes
- Have a sleep problem called obstructive sleep apnea
- Have thyroid problems

Some medicines can also make fatty liver more likely.



Excessive alcohol
consumption



Side effect
of medications



High blood
pressure



Advanced age



Diabetes

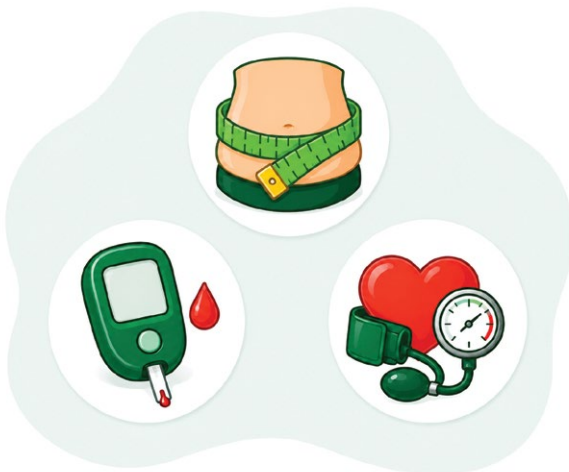
Metabolic syndrome

If you have 2 or more of these, you may have metabolic syndrome.

Metabolic Syndrome is a risk factor for developing fatty liver disease.

These things can include:

- A larger waist
- High bad cholesterol (LDL)
- Low good cholesterol (HDL)
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- Type 2 diabetes
- Insulin resistance



How do I know I have fatty liver disease?

About 1 in 3 people in Australia have fatty liver.

It often has no signs.

Most people find out they have fatty liver disease when they have a blood test or ultrasound for something else.

You can get fatty liver disease even if you are not overweight.

This can happen if you have other health problems.

You may feel:

- Tired
- Pain in right side on top of your belly

How do I know I have fatty liver disease?

If fatty liver disease has caused severe damage to your liver, you may have signs like:

- Yellow eyes or yellow skin
- Bruising easily
- Dark wee
- Swollen belly from fluid
- Vomiting blood
- Black poo
- Itchy skin

If you have these signs, see your doctor or go to the Emergency Department quickly.

What to do next

If your doctor thinks you have fatty liver disease, you will have a blood test and a scan.

This might be a Fibroscan or an ultrasound.

If you have fatty liver disease, the best thing to do is to keep healthy.

- 1 Eat more vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, lean proteins and healthy fats (such as olive oil, nuts and avocado)
- 2 Eat less junk food, salt and sugar.
- 3 Be more active.
- 4 If you need to lose weight, do it slowly.
Losing 5–10% of your body weight can help your liver.
- 5 If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- 6 Ask your doctor if you need medication for cholesterol or blood pressure.
- 7 Check your health with your doctor regularly.

Most of the time, your GP will help you with fatty liver disease.

You may see a liver specialist if your liver is getting worse.

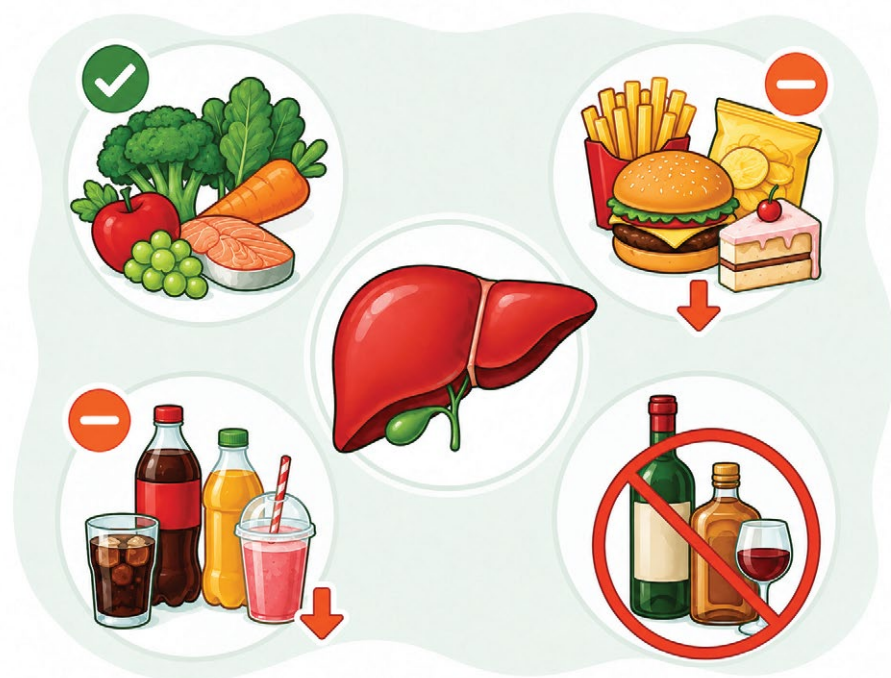
Healthy living for my liver

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



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.

MORE INFORMATION



Scan the QR code to learn more about what to eat for fatty liver.



My notes

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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

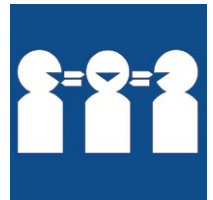


- You can ask for an Interpreter or Auslan.

- 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 fatty liver disease.

It helps people understand the health system.

