

Liver Questions You Could Ask Your Doctor

Background

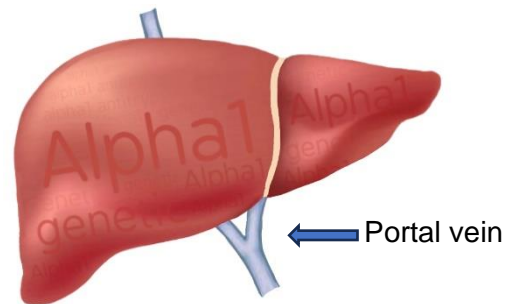
Liver fibrosis (early-stage scarring) and cirrhosis (scarring) result from liver damage. These can be caused by trapped antitrypsin (polymer) in the liver. Scarring in the liver can block blood flow resulting in a slowing down of the liver's ability to process blood, to metabolise nutrients and to filter out toxins. The portal vein moves about 75% blood from the spleen and gastrointestinal tract to the liver. Cirrhosis reduces your liver's ability to produce bile and blood proteins. The scarring can damage blood vessels in the liver and can affect the portal vein system resulting in portal hypertension. Other problems can also lead to cirrhosis such as fatty liver and hepatitis.

Liver Fibrosis Questions

- ❖ Do I have fibrosis?
- ❖ Is it mild, moderate or severe?
- ❖ Can I stop the fibrosis progressing?
- ❖ Is the fibrosis reversible?

Liver Cirrhosis Questions

- ❖ Do I have cirrhosis?
- ❖ Can I stop the cirrhosis progressing?
- ❖ Is it reversible?
- ❖ What stage is my cirrhosis?
- ❖ Do I have reduced liver function (*compensated cirrhosis - stage 3*) or is my liver decompensated (*stage 4*).
- ❖ What symptoms / signs do I need to monitor related to disease progression?
- ❖ Am I eligible for an Alpha-1 Clinical Trial focused on the liver?



Fatty Liver Questions

- ❖ Do I have fatty liver?
- ❖ Is it reversible?
- ❖ What can I do to stop fatty liver progression?

Tests

- ❖ What tests do I need to monitor my liver disorder (e.g. physical exam, urine test, blood test, abdominal ultrasound, CT, MRI, liver Fibroscan (to test how stiff my liver is), liver biopsy, other tests e.g. for my kidneys)?
- ❖ Should I have a test for portal hypertension?
- ❖ Should I have an endoscopy to check for varices in the oesophagus or the stomach (oesophagogastric varices / esophageal varices)?
- ❖ Should I have a scan of my spleen to test for swollen spleen from portal hypertension?
- ❖ Do my blood test results look normal, or do I have fewer white blood cells, fewer platelets, poor clotting factors, low albumin?
- ❖ Can you test for hepatic encephalopathy? What causes it and how can you treat it?
- ❖ How often should my liver be checked / monitored for liver cancer?

Treatment

- ❖ Can you treat my symptoms e.g. feeling itchy, weight loss / weight gain, confusion (*ammonia build up*), fluid in my abdomen (*ascites*)?
- ❖ What should I do / expect if I have an unexpected fluid build-up in my abdomen?
 - Do I need diuretics?
 - Do I need the fluid drained? What is the procedure? Where do I have this procedure?
- ❖ What do I need to do if I get jaundice?
- ❖ If liver cancer is detected what treatment will be recommended?
- ❖ Will anti-inflammatories or antifibrotics help my liver?
- ❖ Should I be treated to prevent bone disease / fractures?
- ❖ What should I do if I have a sudden bleed from my mouth?
- ❖ Do I need a shunt / stent in my portal vein and if so, would I have a general or local anaesthetic?
- ❖ What symptoms do I need to monitor after the shunt / stent procedure?

Lifestyle

- ❖ Can I drink alcohol?
- ❖ What diet should I be on?
- ❖ Can I eat salt, sugar, artificial sweeteners, processed food / meat, fatty food, white flour or take vitamins / supplements?
- ❖ Why do I need to avoid certain foods, salt, supplements?
- ❖ Do I need extra protein? What source?
- ❖ Do I need to lose weight / gain weight?
- ❖ Should I be exercising? What if I am too fatigued?
- ❖ What else do I need to do / consider?

Liver Transplant

- ❖ Do I need a liver transplant?
- ❖ When would I be considered for a liver transplant?
- ❖ What is my Model for End Stage Liver Disease (MELD) score (*used to prioritise and allocate adult patients waiting for a liver transplant*)?
- ❖ How often do I need my MELD score calculated and what tests do I need each time?
- ❖ What work-up assessment will be undertaken regarding my eligibility/suitability for a transplant?
- ❖ Can a live donor donate part of their liver to me e.g. a relative?
- ❖ How long would I be on the transplant list?
- ❖ Where / what hospital would I have the transplant?
- ❖ What medication will I be on before transplant?
- ❖ What medication will I be on after transplant?
- ❖ How long would I be in hospital following liver transplant?
- ❖ What food / supplements / medication do I need / need to avoid post-transplant?
- ❖ What is my life expectancy?

Information and support

Alpha-1 Organisation Australia. Email contactus.a1oa@gmail.com; or mentalhealth.a1oa@gmail.com.

Lifeline Australia 13 11 14.