



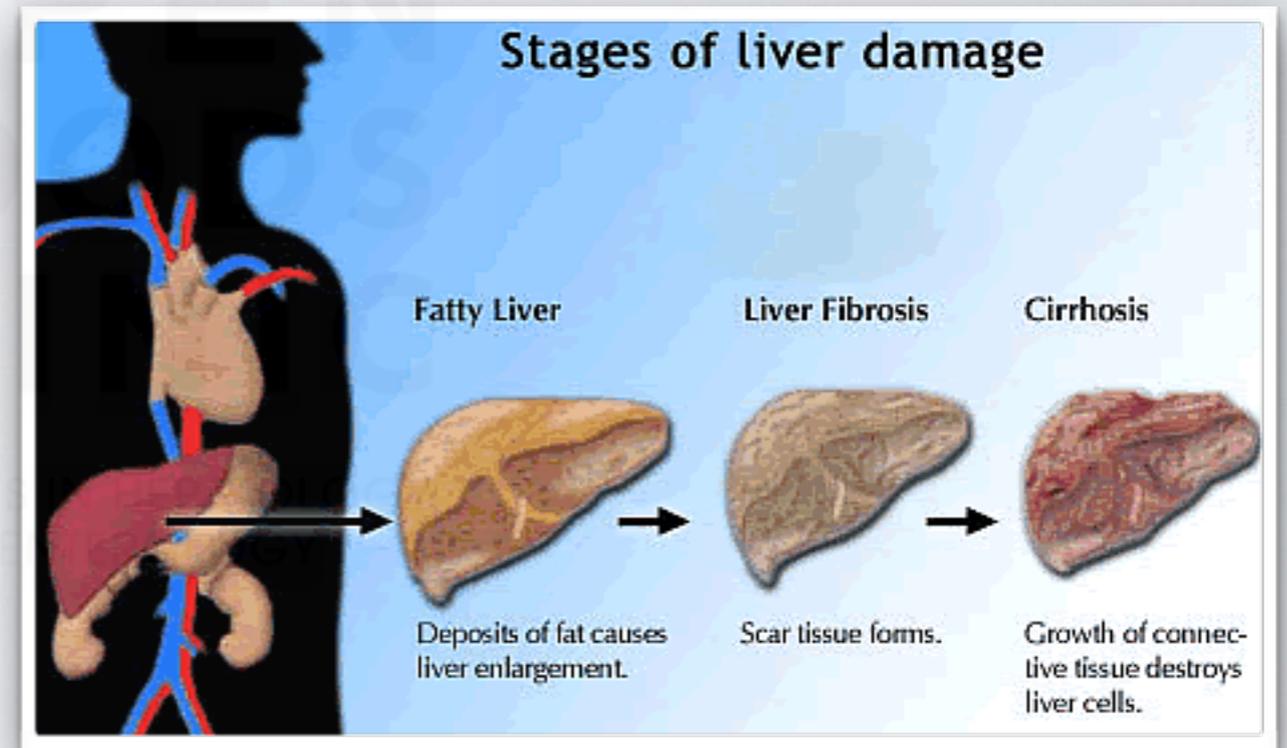
ASPENWOODSCLINIC
SPECIALISTS IN HEPATOLOGY & GASTROENTEROLOGY

Cirrhosis Patient Teaching Information

CIRRHOSIS

What is Cirrhosis:

Cirrhosis is the end stages of a liver disease. Over time, from years to decades, fibrosis (or scar tissue) progresses through stages while your liver attempts to repair itself. Eventually, if left untreated, fibrosis replaces normal liver tissue and eventually results in cirrhosis.



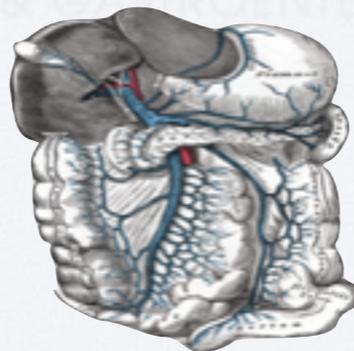
COMMON COMPLICATIONS OF CIRRHOSIS:

•Ascites & Edema:

Accumulation of fluid within the abdominal cavity due to portal hypertension or swelling often in your legs (edema)

•Signs and Symptoms:

Fullness, bloating, distended belly, difficulty breathing or completing meals due to the distended abdomen, weight gain, leg swelling



•Management:

1. Low sodium (salt) diet less than 2000 mg per day
2. High protein 1.2-1.5 grams/kg
3. Monitor your weight regularly
4. Diuretics or 'water pills' will be prescribed:
 - *Lasix (Furosemide novo-semite)*
 - *Spiro lactone (Spironton, aldactone)*
 - *Amiloride*
5. Paracentesis: day procedure performed in a hospital/clinic by using a small needle through the abdominal wall to drain off the fluid.

- **Esophageal Varicose:**

Due to portal hypertension, the veins along the esophagus become engorged with blood and are at risk of bleeding under pressure.

- **Signs and Symptoms:**

Vomiting red blood or passing bloody stool which may also be black pasty stool (melena).

Varices are otherwise painless.



- **Management:**

1. Treat the underlying cause of cirrhosis

2. Endoscopy – a lighted small camera is gently fed down your esophagus to view and potentially treat the enlarged veins.

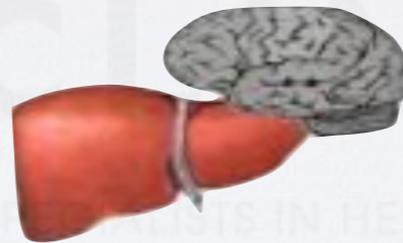
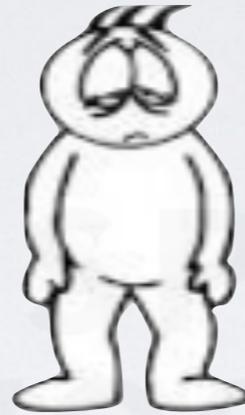
3. Beta- blocker (for high blood pressure) medication may be prescribed. (Nadolol or Carvedilol).

- **Encephalopathy:**

Accumulations of toxins, drugs, ammonia within the blood directly irritates the brain.

- **Signs and Symptoms:**

Confusion, irritability, depression, personality changes, slurred speech, tremors, overly sleepy, day-night-reversal sleep patterns.



- **Management:**

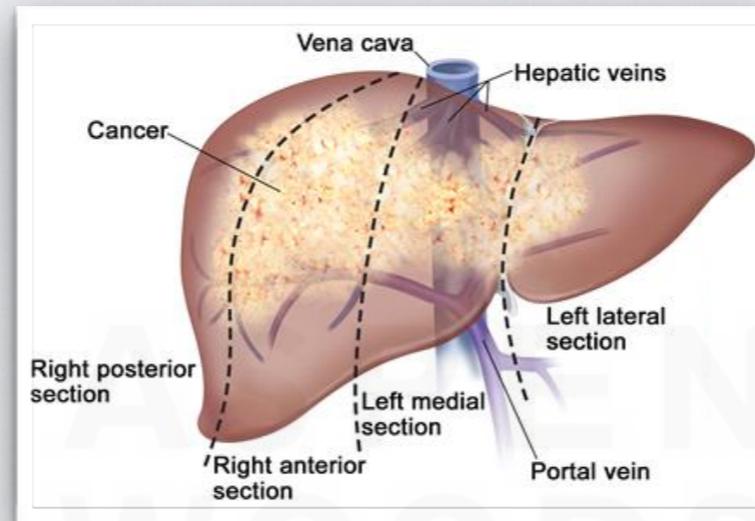
1. Prevent infections, constipation, electrolyte imbalances, bleeding.
2. Lactulose syrup (laxative): 30 – 60 ml twice per day to have upto 4 loose bowel movements per day.
3. Certain antibiotics are sometimes used when lactulose is not enough.

•Liver Cancers:

There is an increased risk of developing liver cancers if you have cirrhosis.

•Signs and Symptoms:

Most patients do not feel liver cancers. In rare occasions, there is discomfort in the right upper quadrant of the belly, fullness or jaundice.



•Management:

1. Prevent cirrhosis
2. Early detection with ultrasounds every 6 months
3. Treatment options may include, surgery, radiofrequency ablation, transarterial chemoembolization or alcohol ablations.
4. An oral chemotherapeutic agent may also be used or radiation for advanced disease.

• **Other notes about living with Cirrhosis:**

For general aches and pains.



Preferable to use Tylenol less than 2000mg per day = 6 x regular strength or maximum 4 extra strength (500mg/tab), but not both!!



Avoid: NSAID or ‘anti-inflammatory’ products like Aspirin (baby aspirin is okay), ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, diclofenac, indomethacin, naproxen, Celebrex, Vioxx. Monitor what is in your cold/flu/muscle relaxant remedies; they often contain NSAID products. Again, choose Tylenol based products.

• **Use of Alcohol:**



None is recommended if you have cirrhosis, or alcohol-related liver disease



Making contact and attending a formal addictions program like the “*Adult Outpatient Addiction Treatment Centre*” is strongly recommended if alcohol is a part of your underlying liver disease. (Ph: 403-297-3071)

• **How often do I get a blood test?**



• Diuretics (water pills) can cause electrolytes to become imbalanced. We often recommend blood work: Periodically we will also follow your liver enzymes and function tests of the liver



Every week []
Every 2 weeks []
Every month []
Every ___ Months []

- What should I eat?



There are no known miracle foods to reverse cirrhosis. Following the Canadian Food Guide is simple and achievable.



Maintaining regular oral intake is important for overall health. Just ensure you monitor your sodium (salt) intake by reading the amounts on food packages and labels. Remember, less than 2000 mg per day.

- How can I get more information about liver disease or cirrhosis?



Being informed will help reduce stress and uncertainty when living with a chronic disease. Cirrhosis is a disease that demands a lot from its patients



Fatigue is very common and a challenge to reverse. Stay positive and educate yourself about your disease, this will have a positive impact on your mental, spiritual and physical wellness.

You can visit the Canadian Liver Foundation website for further information:

www.canadianliverfoundation.ca