

AGA Patient Education Section

Cirrhosis

Cirrhosis is when the liver is permanently scarred or injured by chronic health issues and diseases. The scar tissue that forms in cirrhosis harms the structure of the liver and blocks the flow of blood through the organ. The liver is an important organ, in charge of changing food into energy, cleaning out your body, and making bile.

Symptoms

Patients with cirrhosis often have few symptoms at first, but they may have the following:

- Extreme tiredness.
- Weakness.
- Loss of appetite, often with an upset stomach and weight loss.
- Water building up in the legs or belly.
- Easy bruising or bleeding.
- For females, absent or rare periods, not linked to menopause.
- For males, loss of sex drive or tender, enlarged breasts.

For patients with late-stage or advanced cirrhosis, their symptoms may include:

- Yellow skin (jaundice).
- Intense itching.
- Trouble digesting certain proteins.
- Throwing up blood.

Causes

Cirrhosis has many causes, but some of the most common causes of liver harm are as follows:

- Long-term alcohol abuse.
- Chronic viral hepatitis (types B, C, and D).
- Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.
- Autoimmune hepatitis.
- Obesity.
- Inherited illnesses, such as Wilson's disease or hemochromatosis.

Getting Tested

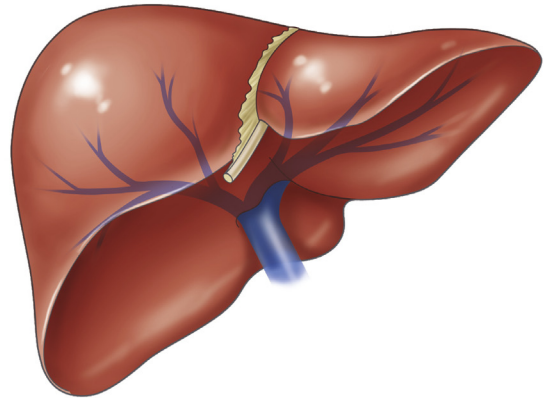
There are many ways to look for cirrhosis, such as:

- Blood tests.
- Computed tomography scan, magnetic resonance image, or ultrasound.
- Ultrasound-based transient elastography or magnetic resonance elastography.
- Liver biopsy.

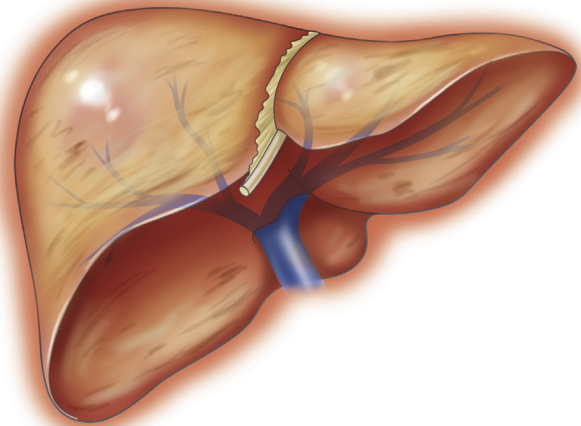
Treatment

Often, patients with cirrhosis should slow harm to the liver by not drinking alcohol; making sure they are vaccinated for the flu, pneumonia, and hepatitis; and keeping up good eating habits. There are certain medicines that also may help. If you have a certain type of hepatitis, your doctor may give you

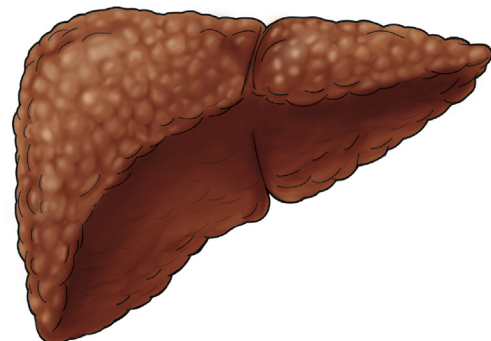
Normal Liver



Chronic Inflammation & Scarring



Cirrhosis



steroids. There are also medications to control itching. If you have very advanced cirrhosis with liver failure, your doctor may talk to you about a liver transplant.

For more information on cirrhosis, talk to your gastroenterologist and visit patient.gastro.org. For more information on cirrhosis, visit <https://www.gastro.org/practice-guidance/gi-patient-center/topic/cirrhosis>.