

Patient information

Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Dietetic Service for Liver Conditions

Nutrition and Dietetics - Therapies

You are receiving this information leaflet as you are having some tests or investigations or are having some treatment for a liver condition.

As part of this service support from a specialist dietitian is available. You are receiving this information leaflet as you have already been contacted by the specialist dietitian team, who have completed a nutritional screening assessment which tells us how helpful it may be for you to have dietetic support. Your results show that you are currently eating well enough and not losing weight and therefore specialist dietetic support is not needed at this time.

As part of the service, we provide this information leaflet to give you general advice on how to eat well with a liver condition.

If you feel that you would benefit from specialist dietitian support, you can opt into the service at any time using the contact details at the bottom of this leaflet.

Guidance:

You may find that your appetite changes during your treatment. You may have periods when your appetite is good and you may have periods when your appetite is reduced compared to normal.

Eating well is important to maintain your strength and provide your body with the energy it needs during any treatment you are having.

When your liver is not working well, your body needs extra calories and protein. This is because your liver may not be able to digest or store enough energy to fuel your body as well as it used to.

If you do not eat enough, you may notice you begin to lose weight, your muscles become weaker, and you are less able to fight off an infection. Other symptoms of liver disease like ascites (abnormal build-up of fluid in the abdomen), oedema (extra fluid on the legs or arms) or encephalopathy (confusion) might get worse.

Check your weight regularly and keep an eye for any signs of weight loss. These can include your clothes, jewellery or watch becoming loose. You may also notice that you lose muscle from your arms, legs or across your chest.

People with a liver condition are sometimes not able to eat enough because of symptoms like:

- Feeling full quickly, especially if you have ascites.
- Feeling sick or vomiting.
- General loss of appetite.

Eating well

People with a liver condition need to eat more calories and protein than others to make sure that they do not lose weight or muscle mass.

If your appetite has dropped, the following tips may be helpful when planning your meals to make sure you are eating enough:

- Try to have three portions of protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs or beans per day.
- Try snacking on cakes, sweets, chocolate and desserts as they contain large amounts of energy.
- If you are feeling full when you eat, try having small frequent meals and snacks instead of larger meals.
- Try to enrich foods with extra calories to get 'every mouthful as nourishing as possible', for example; add full fat milk/cream/custard to cereals or fruit-based desserts so each mouthful has more calories.
- Add unsalted butter or margarine to vegetables, pasta, sauces, desserts, toast, unsalted crackers or potatoes.
- Add cream cheese or cottage cheese to foods wherever possible e.g. homemade soups, toast or unsalted crackers.
- Add sugar to foods e.g. cereals and hot drinks.
- Add honey, jam or syrup to cereals, milk puddings or other desserts.
- Add unsalted nuts/seeds (e.g. pumpkin, sunflower seeds) to yoghurt, porridge, rice pudding, salads, or have a handful as a snack.
- For vegans/vegetarian add legumes, baked beans, tinned beans, soya beans, nuts and seeds.

Avoiding muscle breakdown

If you have a liver condition, your liver finds it more difficult to store energy like it used to. This means that when you go through periods of fasting (e.g. when sleeping at night), your body finds it more difficult to get the energy it needs from energy stored in the liver and can start to breakdown your muscle for energy instead.

Having a late-night carbohydrate snack can help prevent muscle breakdown and weight loss. Some examples of a late-night snack (containing 50g carbohydrates):

- 300ml milk and three plain or chocolate biscuits.
- five plain or chocolate biscuits.
- two thick slices toast with jam.
- Breakfast cereal with milk and banana.
- One and half slices plain or fruit cake.
- Oral nutrition supplements (juice or milk based) that contain 50g carbohydrates.

If you notice any weight or muscle loss, notice that you are eating less or feel that you need some support with your eating, it is important that you contact the specialist dietitian. This is a **free** service, and **you can opt in at any time using** the contact details at the bottom of this leaflet.

We will continue to offer you support for as long you like. You can opt out of this service at any time. If you opt out and then decide you would find some dietitian support helpful, you can also opt back in by contacting us on the details below.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Contact Details:

Email: hpbdietitians@liverpoolft.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0151 706 2120

If you have any questions specifically about your investigations, then please contact your key contact at your local hospital, of where your investigations are taking place.

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Tel: 0151 706 2120

British Liver Trust

Web: www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

Tel: 0800 652 7330

The British Dietetic Association

Web: www.bda.uk.com

NHS Choices

Diet and Liver

Alcohol-related Liver Disease

Web: www.nhs.uk (search Liver and Alcohol-Related Liver Disease).

Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance

Web: www.cmcanceralliance.nhs.uk

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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