

# Fatty Liver and NASH (nonalcoholic steatohepatitis)

## The Liver and What It Does

The liver is a large organ located on the right side of your belly.

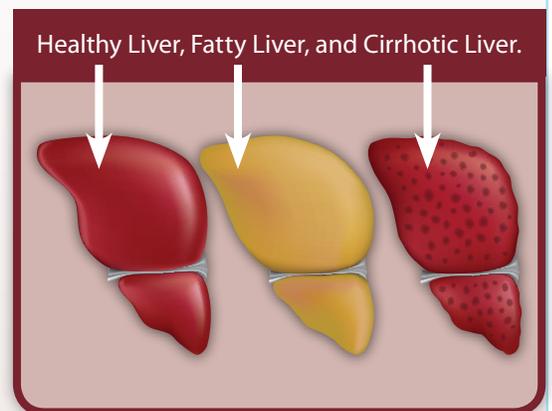
The liver:

- Changes nutrients into energy
- Removes poisons and wastes from the blood
- Assists with digestion
- Helps your blood clot when needed

## Fat in the Liver Can Cause Problems

Weighing too much can cause fat to build up in the liver, resulting in a condition called “**fatty liver.**” More than 70% of overweight people have fatty livers. For most, fatty liver does not seem to cause problems, but fatty liver can set you up for future problems.

In approximately 30% of patients with fatty liver, the fat inflames the liver and scars it, resulting in a disease called nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, or “**NASH.**” NASH resembles alcoholic liver disease, but it develops in people who drink little or no alcohol. With NASH, the liver has difficulty performing normally. When scarring is severe, a life-threatening problem called **cirrhosis** can occur. If you have other types of liver disease, fatty liver can make things worse.



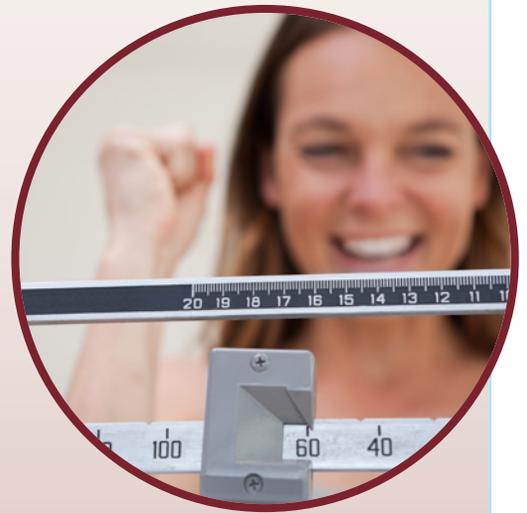
## How Do You Know if You Have NASH?

NASH is usually a silent disease. You may not have any symptoms until NASH becomes very severe or you have unusual responses to medications, alcohol, or diseases. Common blood tests might make your health care team suspect fatty liver or NASH. If your doctor cannot find other causes of liver problems, he or she may want to do a liver biopsy. A liver biopsy uses a needle to remove a tiny sample of liver tissue. Liver biopsy is the only way to be certain that you have NASH.

## Causes of NASH

Scientists are uncertain why some people develop NASH. Many people with NASH develop problems when they:

- Are middle-aged
- Are overweight or obese
- Have higher levels of cholesterol and other fats in their blood
- Have diabetes or pre-diabetes



## Managing NASH

No specific medical treatments for NASH have been found, but leading a healthy lifestyle can help. Here are some tips:

- Manage your weight. Fatty liver and NASH can improve if you lose weight. Consider participating in the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> Weight Management Program.
- Follow a balanced and healthy diet. See the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> Nutrition Handouts.
- Increase your physical activity and make it a regular part of your day. See the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> Physical Activity Handouts.
- Avoid drinking alcohol because alcohol can further damage a fatty liver. If you have trouble stopping or cutting back on alcohol, let your health care team know.
- Avoid taking unnecessary medications.
  - Many medications, even those that are usually very safe for others, may strain the liver.
  - Make sure your health care team knows what medications, vitamins, dietary supplements, and over-the-counter medications you are taking. Your health care team will monitor them carefully.
  - Consult your provider before starting or stopping a medication.

