

The exact cause of Madelung's disease is not known. The body's inability to properly metabolize fat indicates that it may be an endocrine disorder. Some scientists believe a predisposition to the disorder may be inherited and there have been some reports of cases that appear to be familial. However, the mode of transmission in those cases has not been determined. Madelung's disease most frequently affects middle-aged males. The condition is most common in those who abuse alcohol. However, this disease is also found in women and persons who do not consume alcohol. For reasons that are unclear, the disorder appears to be more prevalent in Europe than in the United States. The diagnosis of Madelung's disease may involve ultrasound images, CAT scans, or magnetic resonance imaging.