

Discharge Instructions for Liver Cirrhosis



You have been diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. This is a long-term (chronic) problem. It occurs when liver tissue is destroyed and replaced by scar tissue. Causes of cirrhosis include:

- Infection such as viral hepatitis
- Chronic alcoholism
- The body's immune system attacks healthy cells (autoimmune disorders)
- Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
- Medicine side effects
- Genetic diseases

Sometimes the exact cause is unknown. You may not have any symptoms at first. Or your symptoms may be mild. But they usually get worse. Cirrhosis is likely to occur if you have a history of long-term alcohol abuse. Cirrhosis can't be cured. But it can be treated and sometimes can improve.

Home care

Alcohol

- People with cirrhosis should not drink alcohol. If you stop drinking, you may feel better and live longer. Even if cirrhosis is not from alcohol, alcohol may cause the liver disease to get worse.
- If you are a chronic alcohol user, you will have withdrawal symptoms. Talk with your healthcare provider for more information.
- If alcohol is a problem, ask your provider about medicine that can help you quit drinking.
- Find a local Alcoholics Anonymous support group online at www.aa.org/.

Diet

- Ask your provider what kind of diet you should follow. You may be asked to limit or not eat certain foods. Don't limit your protein intake.
- Weigh yourself daily and keep a weight log. If you have a sudden change in weight, call your provider.
- Cut back on salt:
 - Limit canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods.
 - Don't add salt to your food at the table.
 - Season foods with herbs instead of salt when you cook.

Medicines, supplements, and vaccines

- Take your medicines exactly as directed.

- Talk with your provider before taking vitamins, over-the-counter medicines, or herbal supplements. Some herbal supplements may be toxic to the liver. Painkillers called NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), such as ibuprofen, can harm the liver if you have cirrhosis.
- Don't take aspirin or other blood-thinning medicines unless directed by your provider.
- Discuss vitamin supplements and deficiencies with your provider.
- Ask your provider about getting vaccines for viruses that can cause liver diseases.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised. You will likely have the following tests:

- Lab tests
- Blood tests for liver cancer
- Ultrasound or MRI of your liver every 6 months
- Endoscopy to check for swollen veins (varices) in your digestive tract
- Other tests and medicines are needed if the cirrhosis worsens.

When to call your provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38.0°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Extreme tiredness (fatigue), weakness, or lack of appetite
- Vomiting (with or without blood)
- Yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Itching
- Swelling in your belly or legs
- Black or tarry stools
- Skin that bruises easily
- Confusion or trouble thinking clearly

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