



# Cirrhosis

This is scarring of the liver which damages and reduces liver functions.

A common cause of cirrhosis is drinking too much alcohol too often and for too long.



The liver performs many tasks, including:

- Produces bile (a substance that aids digestion of fats)
- Produces blood proteins
- Helps blood clot
- Metabolizes cholesterol
- Maintains healthy blood sugar levels
- Forms and stores glycogen (the body's short-term energy source)
- Manufactures more than 1,000 enzymes necessary for various bodily functions
- Detoxify substances such as alcohol and many drugs

Fatty deposits accumulate and scarring occurs. This is known as cirrhosis. It's most commonly found in adults older than 50.

People who drink too much generally have poor nutritional habits. Since alcohol replaces food, essential vitamins and minerals are missing from the diet. Malnutrition aggravates cirrhosis.

While alcohol misuse is the most common cause of cirrhosis, hepatitis, taking certain drugs, or exposure to certain chemicals can also produce this condition. Another growing cause of cirrhosis is a build-up of fat in the liver (nonalcoholic fatty liver disease) in people who have metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes.

## SIGNS OF ADVANCED CIRRHOSIS

- Enlarged liver
- Yellowish eyes and skin, and tea-colored urine (indicating jaundice)
- Bleeding from the gastrointestinal tract
- Itching
- Hair loss
- Swelling in the legs and stomach (indicating fluid accumulation)
- Tendency to bruise easily.
- Mental confusion

Cirrhosis can be life threatening, so get medical attention if you suspect your drinking habits may have gotten out of hand or you have any of the above symptoms.

