



Alcohol isn't the only cause of liver disease

There are two categories of fatty liver disease: Alcohol-related fatty liver disease (ALD) and Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). For both categories, having fatty liver disease simply means that you have extra fat in your liver.

Let's talk about ALD first. Alcohol intake over time leads to a buildup of fat in the liver which makes it more difficult for the liver to do its job.

Obviously, this type of liver disease is preventable and can get better with cessation of drinking alcohol. However, continuing to drink can lead to alcoholic hepatitis (a swelling of the liver) and then to alcoholic cirrhosis (scar tissue in the liver) which can then lead to fatal liver failure.

NAFLD is considered to be an epidemic, according to the American

College of Physicians. Twenty-four percent of the world has this disease.

In the United States, it is the most common form of liver disease and affects 80 million to 100 million people. Ten percent of children in the United States have NAFLD. The main causes of this type of liver disease are obesity and diabetes (75 percent of those with NAFLD are obese and 58 percent have Type 2 diabetes).

There are two types of NAFLD: simple fatty liver and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). With simple fatty liver, you have fat in your liver but it's not necessarily causing damage to the liver cells or causing inflammation. NASH does involve having damage and inflammation that can cause scarring, cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure.

Many times, NAFLD causes no

signs or symptoms, but it's possible to have pain in the upper abdomen and an enlarged liver. Those with NASH may have jaundice, red palms, enlarged blood vessels and spleen, abdominal swelling, and enlarged breasts in men.

Weight loss is the best treatment for NAFLD because it reduces fat, inflammation and scarring of the liver. There are currently no medications to treat this disease. Liver transplants are the only way to save those with cirrhosis or liver failure. **LL**

This column is the opinion of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Land Line Magazine or its publisher. Please remember everyone's health situation is different. If you have questions regarding medical issues, consult your personal physician.

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