

## Healthy eating for chronic hepatitis

### What is chronic hepatitis?

Chronic hepatitis is inflammation of the liver that lasts for at least 6 months. The most common causes are hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, metabolic dysfunction-associated liver disease (previously known as nonalcoholic fatty liver disease) and alcohol-related liver disease.

Over time, people with chronic hepatitis may develop symptoms. The most common symptom is fatigue. Fatigue is a feeling of tiredness that does not go away after resting. Other symptoms include loss of appetite, abdominal discomfort and fever.

Some people with chronic hepatitis may develop cirrhosis. Cirrhosis damages your liver, causing it to not work well.

### Is there a special diet for chronic hepatitis?

No. Most people with chronic hepatitis do not need a special diet. Try to eat as well as you can to help support your liver and overall health.

You can use your plate as a guide for a balanced eating pattern. Aim to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits, one quarter with whole grains and another quarter with protein foods.

If you drink coffee, you can continue to enjoy it in moderation. It will not harm your liver. Some studies suggest that coffee helps protect the liver. However, the evidence is not strong enough to recommend drinking coffee if you do not drink or tolerate it.

If you have cirrhosis or other complications, your nutrition needs may be different. Discuss with your health care provider or call [8-1-1](tel:8-1-1) to speak with a registered dietitian.

### What if I'm too tired to prepare meals?

It can be hard to eat if you are too tired to make meals or are not feeling well. Keep these foods on hand so you can make quick and nutritious meals:

- Oatmeal

- Whole grain bread and pasta, brown or wild rice
- Nut butters
- Yogurt, eggs
- Canned fish, beans and lentils
- Low sodium broth and canned soup
- Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits
- Frozen meat, poultry and seafood that is easy to prepare. For example, lean ground meat, ground turkey, fish fillets or shrimp

When you have the energy to cook, make more than you need. Put the leftovers in the freezer to have another meal.

Try these easy-to-make foods when you need a quick snack or a simple meal:

- Apple or pear slices with nut butter
- Vegetables with hummus, bean dip or a yogurt-based dip like tzatziki
- A hard-boiled egg with fruits or vegetables
- Fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit with yogurt or soft tofu
- Hot cereal mixed with milk powder and nuts, seeds or trail mix
- Fresh or frozen berries with cottage cheese
- Edamame (green soybeans) with wild rice
- Roasted chickpeas, lentils or fava beans with salad greens
- Canned fish with whole grain crackers or toast
- Whole grain bread, naan, pita, bagels or crackers with cheese or nut and seed butters
- Reduced sodium canned bean or lentil soup with whole grain crackers

If you need help accessing food and would like to learn about grocery and meal programs, call [8-1-1](tel:8-1-1) to speak with a registered dietitian.

## What if I'm losing weight?

If you are underweight, losing weight without trying, or have a small appetite, you may not be eating enough calories to meet your energy needs.

To help prevent weight loss, try eating small amounts of food more often and choose foods that are higher in calories. Here are examples of higher calorie foods to include in meals and snacks:

- Nuts, seeds and their butters
- Dried fruit like dates, coconut mango, figs, apricots and raisins
- 2% or 3.25% milk or kefir, yogurt smoothies, soy beverage, meal replacement drinks
- Whole milk powder or canned coconut milk, prepared as drinks or added to sauces, soups, cooked cereals or mashed potatoes
- Higher fat yogurt, sour cream, cream cheese and cheese. When comparing food labels, look for a higher % M.F.
- Poultry, meat, wild game, fatty fish, egg
- Reduced sodium cream soups
- Avocado
- Soft margarine and oils such as olive, canola, peanut, sunflower and safflower. These can be used in cooking, salad dressings and dips

Limit candy, chips, donuts, pop, sweetened specialty coffee and tea, energy drinks and sports drinks. These foods give you energy but do not give you important nutrients like protein, vitamins and minerals.

## What if I have extra weight?

If you have extra weight, reaching and maintaining your best weight can help slow liver damage. For people with metabolic dysfunction-associated liver disease, modest weight loss may help improve liver health.

Your weight is not just a result of what you eat or how active you are. Many factors, including

genetics, medications, stress and sleep quality also influence your weight.

If you would like to discuss your eating and physical activity goals, you can call [8-1-1](tel:8-1-1) to speak with a registered dietitian or qualified exercise professional. Visit your health care provider to learn more about other treatment options.

## Do I need to take vitamin and mineral supplements?

Maybe. People with hepatitis may not absorb or use nutrients properly. If you are not eating well, you might need a vitamin and mineral supplement.

Do not take high doses of any vitamin or mineral, especially iron, unless your health care provider tells you to. High doses of some vitamins and minerals can be toxic and damage your liver.

Talk to your health care provider before you take any supplements or herbal products.

## Is it okay to drink alcohol?

Alcohol can damage your liver and make the problems caused by hepatitis worse. To be safe, do not drink alcohol.

For support with limiting or avoiding alcohol, discuss with your health care provider or call [8-1-1](tel:8-1-1) to learn about local programs and services.

## For more information

- Canada's food guide kitchen: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/kitchen>
- [HealthLinkBC File #40a Hepatitis C virus infection](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #40b Living well with hepatitis C virus infection](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #40d Living well with hepatitis B virus infection](#)
- Liver Canada [www.liver.ca](http://www.liver.ca) or toll free help line at [1-800-563-5483](tel:1-800-563-5483)
- Mental health and substance use supports in B.C. <https://helpfstartshere.gov.bc.ca>

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