

WHO WE ARE

Dr. Rela Institute & Medical Centre is a multi-specialty medical facility. It houses state of the art operating rooms and ICU facilities. The Liver Transplant Unit at the hospital, was opened in October 2018 to meet the needs of people in India and abroad suffering with liver disease and requiring a liver transplant. The unit is headed by Prof. Mohamed Rela, a world renowned liver transplant surgeon with over 28 years of experience. He has performed over 1500 liver transplant surgeries in India and in excess of 4000 transplants worldwide.

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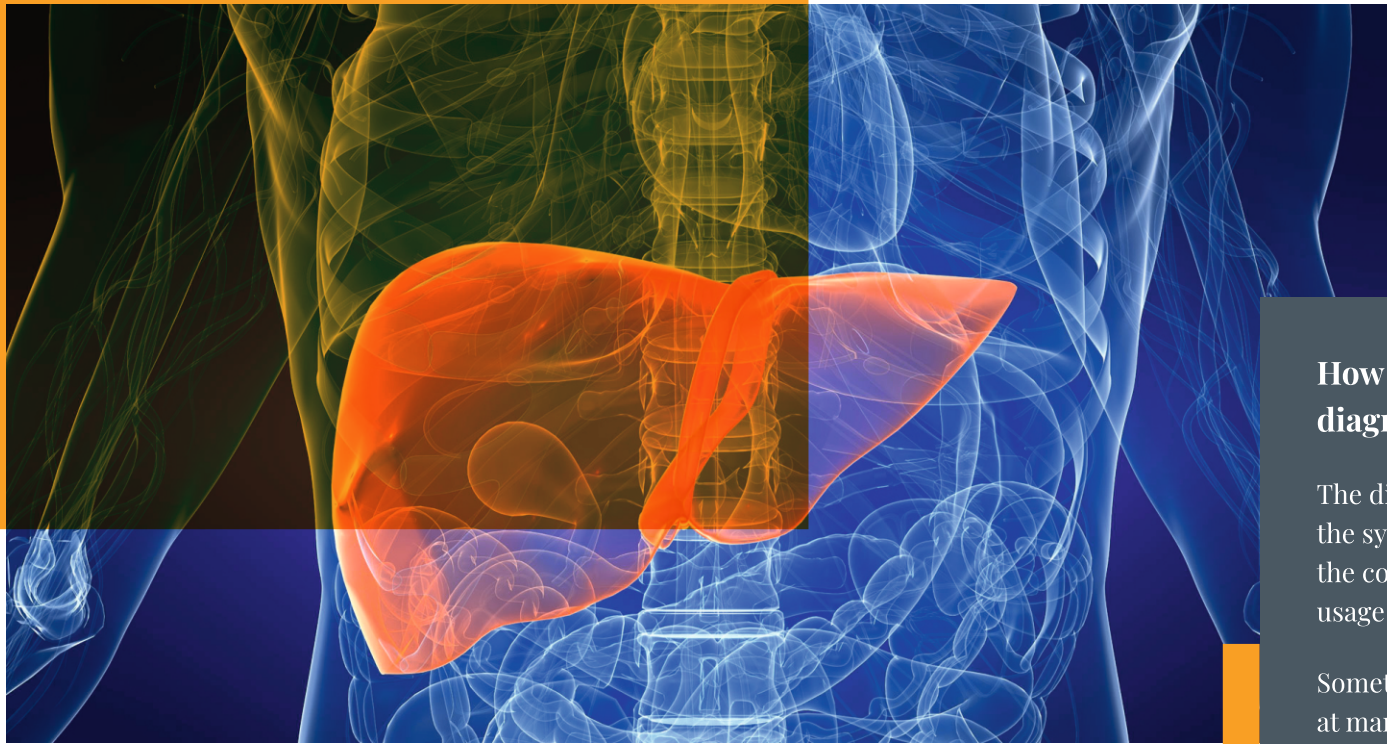
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DR. RELA INSTITUTE & MEDICAL CENTRE



Alcohol & Liver Disease



Liver & It's Functions

The liver is the largest solid organ in the human body and is located on the right side of the abdomen, under the ribs.

The liver has over 500 different functions that are essential for life. A few of them include: bile production that helps breakdown fatty foods, absorbing and metabolizing bilirubin, removing toxins from the blood, storage of vitamins and minerals, supporting blood clots and production of albumin.

How does the liver process alcohol?

Most of the alcohol consumed, is taken up by the liver for processing. Here the liver breaks down the alcohol. The resulting chemical reaction produces some toxic chemicals as byproducts which in high concentration, damages the liver cells. The liver can handle alcohol in moderation. In cases when excessive alcohol is consumed in one sitting (also called binge drinking) or is consumed over a prolonged period of time, it can take a serious toll on the liver and may cause Liver Failure.

Alcohol Related Liver Disease (ALD)

Alcoholic Liver Disease is a spectrum of disease. Going from least severe to most, we have

How is Alcohol Related Liver Disease (ALD) diagnosed?

The diagnosis includes a combination of several factors namely, the symptoms that you present with, a physical examination by the consultant, an investigation relating to your habit of alcohol usage and results from the lab tests.

Sometimes LFT (Liver Function Test) results come back normal at many stages of liver disease. To confirm the extent of the disease, further testing is needed. This may include imaging tests like CT Scan, MRI or Ultrasound. If the diagnosis is uncertain then a Liver Biopsy may be considered.

Fatty Liver (Steatosis)

When the liver is presented with too much alcohol to process over a period of time, it leads to increased fat production, which gets accumulated in the liver causing it to be large, heavy, greasy, yellow and tender. This is the early stage of ALD and at this point the patient does not have any symptoms and the condition usually goes away once drinking is stopped.

Alcohol Related Hepatitis

This is the next stage, where the liver cells become inflamed and damaged. At this point, the patient may have some symptoms which include fever, jaundice, nausea and abdominal pain. In its mild form, this condition may last for years and is reversible when drinking is stopped. Sometimes, the disease may occur acutely like when 'Binge Drinking' which may lead to life threatening



RISK FACTORS

Alcoholic Hepatitis can occur even amongst people who drink less. This is because they may have other risk factors viz;

- Women tend to have a higher risk than men due to the way their body processes alcohol.
- Obese drinkers are prone to develop alcoholic hepatitis which can worsen to cirrhosis.
- It is believed genetic factors culminated with environmental factors play a role too.
- Binge Drinking is another important risk factor.

complications..

Alcohol Related Cirrhosis

Cirrhosis occurs when the liver cells are damaged and are replaced with scar tissues. This is the most serious type of ALD and is a result of continuous and prolonged alcohol abuse to the liver, not giving it a chance to recover. This results in Liver Failure. Usually by this stage the condition is irreversible, however abstinence may halt further damage to the liver. Symptoms include pruritus (itching), jaundice, loss of appetite, enlargement of liver etc.

The different stages of ALD can overlap and need not be in the specific order.

COMPLICATIONS

Complications include:

Portal Hypertension and varices

This is a common complication of cirrhosis where the blood pressure inside the liver is elevated. This is because the blood needs to find new ways to reach the heart as moving through scarred liver becomes difficult. The blood finds smaller blood vessels to do the job and they become stretched and weakened in the process. These weakened blood vessels are called varices. When the blood pressure increases to a certain level the varices rupture and causes bleeding. This is usually managed by an endoscopic procedure called 'Banding'. Bleeding

slowly over a long period of time causes 'Anemia'.

Ascites

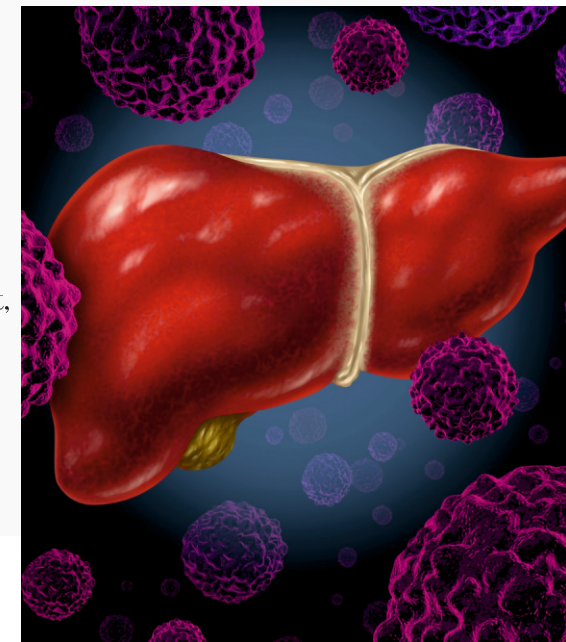
This is when fluid builds up around the abdomen which can be very uncomfortable. This is usually managed with water tablets or an invasive procedure called 'paracentesis' where the fluid is drained using a tube.

Hepatic Encephalopathy

Due to Cirrhosis, the liver is unable to remove toxins from the blood. As a result, the blood carries a high level of toxins which causes Encephalopathy. The symptoms usually are alteration in sleep pattern, confusion, disorientation, muscle tremors and sometimes difficul

Liver Cancer

One of the more severe complications is the risk of developing Cancer of the Liver.



ALCOHOLIC HEPATITIS

SYMPTOMS AND COMPLICATIONS

The more liver damage there is, the more these symptoms will be experienced:

- A loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Nausea/vomiting
- Dry mouth
- Fever



THE LIVER
CAN ONLY HANDLE
a certain amount of
ALCOHOL
AT ANY GIVEN TIME



- Jaundice or icterus which is the yellowing of skin or eyes
- Negative changes in mental state, including confusion

TREATMENTS

Abstinence

The first and foremost treatment is to quit drinking for good (Abstinence). Depending on the severity, this can also help reverse the condition. This is possible due to the unique ability of the liver to repair itself. Giving up alcohol may not be easy, but it is the only way to stop further damage to the liver and any chance of survival should a transplant become necessary.

Nutritional Support

The liver receives most of its nutrition from the food we eat. When diagnosed with Liver Disease, dietary changes can make a huge difference. It is common for patients with ALD to be malnourished. This is because majority of their daily calories come from alcohol and also the poor absorption of nutrients. A key component of treatment will be to restore adequate nutrients. A balanced diet rich in protein and calorie, low in salt and sugar is recommended. *It is very important to consult a dietician to help plan your diet.*

Medications

Treatment varies depending on what stage of liver disease they present themselves at the hospital.

Patients with ALD can present with abnormal LFTs whilst being asymptomatic. These patients are managed in OP with advice to abstain from alcohol. However, jaundiced patients diagnosed with Alcoholic Hepatitis are admitted at the hospital and they will require IV Vitamins and anti-inflammatory medications like Corticosteroids to help reduce inflammations along with nutritional therapy

Patients with more severe conditions like in decompensated cirrhosis, liver transplant becomes the best option as the outcome without the transplant can be very poor.

Liver Transplant

In patients where the liver has ceased function owing to liver failure, transplant becomes the only definitive treatment. Transplant is considered for patients who

- are able to demonstrate sobriety for 6 months
- commit to not drinking ever again
- are physically fit to undergo surgery

Non Liver Related Complications

Drinking Alcohol has its effects on every organ in your body but some organs are more vulnerable than others.

Brain

Alcohol effects on the brain can be quickly felt. Temporary effects include memory loss, lack of coordination, slurred speech and vision impairment while long term complications include seizures, loss of balance and emotional response issues

Pancreas

The pancreas is responsible for regulating your body's blood sugar level. When consuming alcohol over a long period of time, it leads to a condition called Pancreatitis, where the blood vessels around the pancreas swell up.

Kidney

A Cirrhotic Liver may affect blood flow to the kidneys, causing Kidney Failure.

Heart

Heavy drinking can weaken the heart, affecting how oxygen and nutrients are delivered to other vital organs of the body. Short term effects are high blood pressure and irregular heartbeat while long term effects are more severe like stroke and sudden cardiac arrest.