

## **Cirrhosis Patient Instructions**

Our goal in treating cirrhosis is to maintain your liver health. We would like to prevent potential problems that could cause your liver to fail. These are some of the ways to do so.

1. Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol causes cirrhosis by itself and also makes every other liver disease worse. Alcohol can cause your liver to give out sooner.
2. Do not smoke marijuana. This can cause increased scarring in your liver.
3. If you have been vaccinated for hepatitis B or A or have not already had these diseases you need to be vaccinated. Getting hepatitis A or B when you have cirrhosis can be fatal.
4. Watch your salt intake. It is important to stay under 2 grams a day. Your threshold may be lower if you already have fluid retention.
5. Do not take Aspirin, Motrin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (also called NSAIDs) for pain, these can hurt kidneys. People with cirrhosis who have normal kidneys live longer than those whose kidneys are damaged.
6. Tylenol is safe to take for occasional pain, as long as you are not drinking alcohol and you take less than a total of 2 grams a day.
7. Do not eat shellfish. These can harbor an organism that can cause fatal liver disease in people with cirrhosis.
8. You need to be screened for liver cancer every six months, as the risk of liver cancer is increased in cirrhosis. This is usually done with a blood test and an ultrasound. Please remind your primary care physicians when you are due, if you are not automatically scheduled. We usually recommend you pick your birth month and another important date such as Christmas, the Fourth of July, an anniversary or another month, to use as memory aids.
9. Quit smoking . This can increase your risk of liver cancer.
10. Do not take herbal products, vitamin supplements that contain more than 100% of your daily recommended value or other products from the health food store unless they are approved by your physician, even if they are specifically marketed for liver health. These products can hurt your liver. Remember that everything that you take in through your mouth is filtered through the liver.
11. Exercise caution with sleeping pills. A particular class of these pills called benzodiazepines are problematic with advanced liver disease and can cause confusion.
12. In some cases your doctor might recommend an endoscopy to look for another potential problem, esophageal varices, which are thin walled vessels in your esophagus that can bleed.

(Written by Sripriya Balasubramanian)