

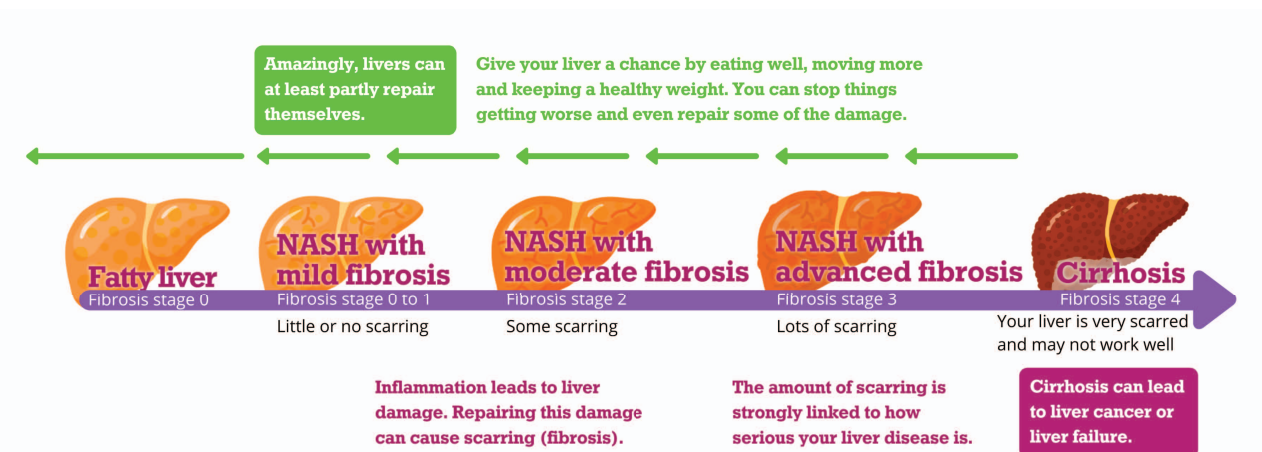
Non-alcohol related fatty liver disease

What is non-alcohol related fatty liver disease (NAFLD)?

NAFLD is a long-lasting liver condition caused by having too much fat in the liver. It is closely linked with excess bodyweight as well as conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart and circulatory disease.

In some people the fat that has built up in their liver can cause inflammation. This damages the liver and can cause scarring (fibrosis). The level of scarring in your liver is an important sign of how serious your condition is.

NAFLD can cause serious health problems. In a small number of people NAFLD can lead to liver cancer or liver failure.



Some people are only diagnosed with NAFLD when their condition has become serious because it often has no symptoms.

Treatment for NAFLD has 2 main aims:

- To stop it getting worse, so that it does not lead to liver cancer or liver failure.
- To help your liver repair as much damage as possible and reverse your NAFLD.

The main treatment for NAFLD is eating a healthy diet, being more physically active, and losing weight (if you need to). These 3 things can stop your liver disease getting worse and in many cases help reverse some of the damage.

For detailed advice on eating a well balanced diet and getting more active, download our booklet **Treating NAFLD with a healthy diet and physical activity**.

What happens next?

Your doctor will do some more tests to understand how much scarring there is likely to be in your liver and how serious your NAFLD is. This is very important and will help your doctor to decide on your care.

The medical name for scarring is fibrosis. It is measured on a scale from 0 to 4. The higher the number, the more scarring there is and the more severe it is. Most doctors use a scoring system based on the results of several blood tests to judge how much scarring you have. Sometimes people have a special scan to test their liver stiffness (transient elastography eg Fibroscan™) or have a liver biopsy.

If you have **earlier stage NAFLD without signs of advanced fibrosis** your GP surgery will manage your care.

Your doctor should:

- Discuss your diet, weight and physical activity levels with you. And help you decide and plan changes that help reduce the fat in your liver.
- See you at least once a year to check on your NAFLD and how you are doing with making healthy changes to your life. They should also do tests to check your risk of developing a related condition like type 2 diabetes or a heart condition.
- Do a new fibrosis test at least once every 3 years. This is very important because there are often no symptoms to tell you or your doctor that your NAFLD is getting worse.

If you have **later stage NAFLD with advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis** you will be referred to a doctor based in a hospital who specialises in either the liver (hepatologist) or digestive system (gastroenterologist). This doctor will manage your care and you will also have a range of other specialists as part of your multidisciplinary team (MDT).

Your care should include:

- A care plan that sets out how often you should have tests and appointments.
- Help to reduce the amount of fat in your liver, through diet, physical activity and managing your weight. Your MDT should include the specialists you need to help you, such as a dietitian, psychologist or physical activity specialist.
- Regular tests, including fibrosis tests, to check your NAFLD isn't getting worse. People often have no symptoms, so this is very important.
- Managing and treating any complications that you develop if you have cirrhosis or your condition gets worse.
- Screening (surveillance) for liver cancer every 6 months (if you have cirrhosis).

What does treatment for NAFLD involve?

Whatever your weight, eating healthily and being more physically active can each help reduce liver fat and improve NAFLD. And for most people these are the best ways to lose weight, if you need to.

Keep a healthy weight

If you are overweight, the most important thing you can do to improve your NAFLD is to lose weight. Research shows that losing 5 to 10% of your body weight can control and in some cases reverse NAFLD.

Doctors use a measure called the body mass index (BMI) as a guide to whether someone is a healthy weight for their height. It's not perfect, but it is a useful guide for most people.

You can calculate your BMI on the NHS website, or ask your doctor to work it out for you.

BMI	Weight range
Below 18.5	Underweight
Between 18.5 and 24.9	Healthy weight
Between 25 and 29.9	Overweight
30 or more	Obese

For people who are Black, Asian, or belong to another ethnic minority, the risk of developing some conditions starts to increase at a BMI of 23. Even though this is in the healthy range, it's a good idea to keep an eye on your weight.

Eat a well-balanced diet

There is no magic diet or specific list of foods and drinks that will cure you or to avoid completely. Instead, for most people a well-balanced diet is the best way to stay healthy and manage your weight.

The aim is to generally eat and drink healthily most of the time and not have too much or too little of anything. The overall picture is more important than any one small detail. If you are struggling to change your diet, ask to be referred to a dietitian.

Be more physically active

Aim to do at least 2½ hours of physical activity every week that gets you a bit out of breath. Brisk walking, team sports, swimming and dancing all count. You can break it down into smaller bouts of 10 minutes at a time.

And do activities to strengthen your muscles twice a week. This could be things like yoga, chair exercises, working with weights or even carrying heavy shopping.

Don't worry if you can't do the target amount at first. Start small and build up the amount you do over time – remember that any activity is better than none.

Your doctor can advise you on types of activity that would suit you.

Where can I get advice and support?

Although changing your habits can be hard, remember that lots of people make changes to be healthier and you can too. You don't have to do it alone, there are lots of ways to get help.

Ask your doctor how they can help you. They might be able to refer you to a dietitian, weight loss programme, or local services such as exercise schemes or walking groups.

The British Liver Trust are here to help everyone with liver disease

- Read and download information online.

Scan the code with your phone or visit

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/naflc

- Call our nurse-led helpline on **0800 652 7330**.
- Join our online community **www.healthunlocked.com/britishlivertrust**
- Join one of our Support Groups



Other useful websites

NHS live well resources www.nhs.uk/live-well

Including the eat well guide and the NHS 12-week weight loss plan.

NHS how fit www.howfittoday.co.uk

Simple exercise ideas and links to local services to help you take small steps to feeling good.

British Dietetic Association www.bda.uk.com/food-health

Food fact sheets, recipes, and advice on cooking with kids — plus plenty of tips.

BEAT www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

This eating disorders charity understands that eating disorders are complex mental health issues.

Call our office: 01425 481320

Email us: info@britishlivertrust.org.uk

Visit our website: www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

 [Facebook.com/britishlivertrust](https://www.facebook.com/britishlivertrust)

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