

FEATURED ARTICLE



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NAFLD, A NEW DISEASE EPIDEMIC

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is a condition that many people have but may not know they actually have it. It is slowly coming to the forefront in health care because of its prevalence and its impact on the health of individuals who have it. It is a condition I am seeing more and more in my practice and is often overlooked in a patient's long-term health.

What is NAFLD?

NAFLD occurs when fat is deposited in the liver, which is not due to alcohol consumption. It is a chronic disease associated with obesity, metabolic syndrome and insulin resistance. It is a silent condition: unless a person has an ultrasound or biopsy on the liver to identify its presence, one may be likely unaware that they have it. To make matters more disconcerting, its prevalence has sky rocketed significantly since the 2000's.

Why is it important to be aware of NAFLD?

Obesity is continually on the rise around the world. We have taken to unhealthy, unnatural eating patterns that are killing us. Up to 80% of obese people have NAFLD; as a result, it is now considered more serious than viral induced hepatitis. It is the leading cause of chronic liver disease.

Causes of NAFLD:

The cause of NAFLD is largely dietary and lifestyle related. People who consume large amounts of refined foods, including carbohydrates, simple sugars, and high fructose corn syrup seem to have the most impact on the disease. Lack of exercise contributes to the condition. There is a genetic link where families with type II diabetes have a higher incidence of NAFLD in family members. NASH (Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis) is the most severe form of NAFLD. It is where inflammation occurs in the liver causing liver cell damage. This can lead to cancer and liver failure. Causes of NASH include gallbladder disease, rapid weight loss, the use of medications such as methotrexate, synthetic estrogens, tamoxifen, and corticosteroids.

What can be done?

In order to reduce your risk of developing this chronic illness, there are many things you can do for prevention.

1. Maintain a healthy weight.

With many of the fad diets out these days, it is not considered a healthy way to get to the weight that is best for you. Instead, consider having a consultation with a licensed naturopathic doctor or nutritionist to determine the best way to lose the weight. Losing weight too quickly can trigger fatty liver.

2. Exercise.

Exercising will not only help you lose those extra pounds, it will also support the metabolism of the fatty deposits in the liver to dissolve. It supports circulation, which will help the liver process toxins more effectively and get the body in to a healthier state faster.

3. Consume foods that support a healthy liver function.

The following lists are foods that have shown to improve fatty liver and prevent it from becoming diseased:

- High fiber foods such as oats, apples and beets
- High antioxidant foods such as green tea, spinach, blueberries, grapefruit and brazil nuts
- Being hydrated and consuming healthy fats such as olive oil and omega 3's from fish

Our liver is an organ we cannot survive without. It does however given the right support; it can heal to work at its optimum for long lasting health and vitality.