



Healthy eating for chronic hepatitis

What is chronic hepatitis?

Chronic hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that lasts for at least 6 months. The most common causes are hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, fatty liver 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 so it doesn't work well. If you have cirrhosis or other complications, your nutrition needs may be different. Speak to your health care provider or a registered dietitian about your diet.

Is there a special diet for chronic hepatitis?

No. Try to eat as well as you can to help support your liver and overall health. Aim for a healthy eating pattern that includes vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein foods daily.

Examples of healthy eating patterns include Canada's food guide and the Mediterranean and DASH diets.

It's important to meet your protein needs. Try to include protein foods at each meal and snack. Protein foods include:

- Beans, peas, lentils, nuts and seeds
- Lower fat milk, yogurt and cheese
- Fortified soy beverage
- Fish, poultry, lean meat, eggs, tofu

If you drink coffee, continue to enjoy it in moderation. It won't harm your liver. Some

studies suggest that caffeinated coffee helps protect the liver. However, the evidence isn't strong enough to recommend drinking coffee if you don't drink or tolerate it.

What if I am too tired to prepare meals?

It can be hard to eat if you are too tired to make meals or are not feeling well. Aim to keep healthy snacks and easy-to-make foods available, such as:

- Whole grain bread, naan, bagels or crackers with nut or seed butter
- Whole grain crackers and cheese
- Vegetables with hummus or a yogurt-based dip such as tzatziki
- Vegetables and a hardboiled egg
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit with yogurt or soft tofu
- Apple or pear slices with nut butter
- Fresh or frozen berries with cottage cheese
- Canned fish with whole grain crackers or toast
- Hot cereal with nuts and seeds or trail mix
- Reduced sodium canned bean or lentil soup with whole grain crackers

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

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 some examples of nutritious foods to include at meals and snacks:

- Nuts, seeds and their butters
- 2% or 3.25% whole milk, high fat yogurt and cheese
- Yogurt smoothies and meal replacement drinks
- Fish, poultry, tofu, legumes, meat and egg
- Avocado
- Olive or canola oil, and non-hydrogenated margarine (used in cooking, salad dressings, dips, or as a spread)

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?

Healthy eating and being active is important for everyone, regardless of body size or health. Reaching and maintaining your best weight can support liver health. For people with fatty liver disease, modest weight loss may help slow liver damage.

If you are concerned about your weight or a change in your weight, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak with a registered dietitian.

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 multivitamin/mineral supplement.

Do not take high doses of any vitamin or mineral, especially iron and vitamin A, unless your health care provider tells you to.

High doses of some vitamins and minerals can be toxic. 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.

If you would like support to help you limit or avoid alcohol, talk to your health care provider or call 8-1-1 for more information.

What about physical activity?

Physical activity can improve appetite, decrease stress, lessen depression, and help you reach or maintain a healthy body weight. If you have been inactive for a long time, increase your activity slowly.

Participating in physical activity is safe for most people. If you have other medical conditions or injuries, check with your health care provider or a qualified exercise professional before becoming more active.

For more information

- Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- [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](#)
- Canadian Liver Foundation at www.liver.ca, or call toll-free 1 800 563-5483
- Mental Health and Substance Use Supports in B.C. www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/mental-health-support-in-bc
- For nutrition information, call **8-1-1** to speak to a registered dietitian

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.