



Liver Glossary

Following is a list of terms used in the road map and a few others you may hear. More extensive descriptions of the conditions described can be found on the internet.

Ascites is the result of retaining an abnormal amount of fluid in the abdomen. This occurs in about 50% of those with cirrhosis. A paracentesis is the procedure used to drain excess fluids from the abdomen.

Cirrhosis occurs when scar tissue impairs the liver's ability to function.

Compensated Cirrhosis means that, despite being cirrhotic, the liver is functioning relatively well and a patient may not have any symptoms

Decompensated Cirrhosis occurs when the liver is unable to effectively carry out its functions and symptoms begin to present themselves.

Edema is swelling caused by excess fluids in the body's tissues.

Fatty Liver occurs when more than 5 to 10% of the liver is infiltrated with fat

Hepatic Encephalopathy (or HE) occurs when the liver loses, in whole or in part, the ability to prevent toxins from reaching the bloodstream. This can result in ammonia making its way in the blood system and your brain. HE causes brain fog and in its most extreme cases can lead to a coma and even death. It is estimated that 30-40% of those with decompensated cirrhosis will get HE.

Hepatocellular Carcinoma (or HCC) is a cancer that originates in the liver. If it spreads beyond the liver the patient will no longer be considered for a transplant. It is estimated that less than 10% of those with decompensated cirrhosis will get HCC.

Glossary (Continued)

Jaundice is the yellowing of the skin due to the buildup of bilirubin, a waste material, in the blood.

MELD stands for Model for End-Stage Liver Disease and is used to measure the severity and extent of liver disease. MELD is calculated based on the results of bloodwork and ranges from 6 (healthy) to 40 (no liver functionality).

NAFLD is the acronym for Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease and is **Fatty Liver** not caused by Alcohol.

NASH is the acronym for Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis and occurs when the liver swells and there is damage to liver cells.

Reversal means that fatty liver disease can be reversed through lifestyle changes.

Simple Fatty Liver is a benign condition that does little damage to the liver.

Splenomegaly is an enlarged spleen resulting from the increase of blood pressure in the spleen caused by cirrhosis.

Varices are swollen veins in the abdomen or the esophagus. The veins are fragile and susceptible to rupture.

Liver 101

The liver is located in abdomen under the rib cage on the right side and is the largest solid organ in the human body. You cannot live without a liver.

The liver performs over 500 vital functions including eliminating toxins, process food into energy and nutrients, assisting in the immune system and aiding in blood clotting.

Stages of Cirrhosis

Compensated		Decompensated	
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
No Varices No Ascites	Varices No Ascites	Varices Ascites	Bleeding Ascites

Source: Hepatitis C Online

Reversing Liver Disease

The liver is a very forgiving organ and damage can often be reversed if caught early and lifestyle changes are made. As liver disease progresses it can become more difficult to reverse. The early stages of NASH can be reversed but once it advances to decompensated cirrhosis reversal is rare.

Actions that can be taken include:

- Control your weight, exercise and follow a healthy diet
- Don't smoke, limit alcohol and don't overmedicate
- Avoid opioids and other drugs
- Avoid touching or breathing toxins such as pesticides

Diet information is available at a variety of internet sources, but there is a lot of misinformation out there. The simplest advice is to follow a Mediterranean diet. The Fatty Liver Foundation's website also provides good advice. (www.fattyliverfoundation.org)



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