

# Cirrhosis Diet

## Lifestyle and home remedies

If you have cirrhosis, be careful to limit additional liver damage:

- **Don't drink alcohol.** Whether your cirrhosis was caused by chronic alcohol use or another disease, avoid alcohol. Drinking alcohol may cause further liver damage.
- **Eat a low-sodium diet.** Excess salt can cause your body to retain fluids, worsening swelling in your abdomen and legs. Use herbs for seasoning your food, rather than salt. Choose prepared foods that are low in sodium.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Cirrhosis leads to malnutrition and loss of muscle. The best defense against this development is to maintain a healthy diet, with a variety of fruits and vegetables. You also need protein, contrary to outdated but still circulating advice to limit this food group if you have cirrhosis. Choose lean protein, such as legumes, poultry or fish. Avoid raw seafood.
- **Avoid infections.** Cirrhosis makes it more difficult for you to fight off infections. Protect yourself by washing your hands frequently. Also, get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B, influenza, and pneumonia.
- **Use over-the-counter medications carefully.** Cirrhosis makes it more difficult for your liver to process drugs. For this reason, ask your doctor before taking any medications, including nonprescription drugs. Avoid drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others). If you have liver damage, your doctor may recommend you use a lower dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol, others).

## Alternative medicine

A number of alternative medicines have been used to treat liver diseases. Milk thistle (silymarin) is the most widely used and best studied. Other herbs used include licorice root (glycyrrhiza), schisandra and astragalus. However, there is not enough evidence of benefit from clinical trials to recommend the use of any herbal products to treat liver cirrhosis. In addition, herbal medications represent an increasing percentage of reported cases of drug-induced liver injury. Talk with your doctor if you're interested in trying alternative medicine to help you cope with cirrhosis.