

Dietary advice for advanced decompensated liver disease (page 1 of 3)



You have been identified as having a specific nutritional care need due to problems with your liver. You may have been experiencing symptoms such as fluid build up in your abdomen (ascites), loss of appetite and nausea. While you are in hospital it is easier for the team to monitor and manage what and how much food you receive. However, when you go home the responsibility shifts to you and those who assist with your day to day care (family, neighbours, carers).

This information leaflet has been created as a guide for how you can maximise your nutrition to benefit your overall health. It is important you ask your doctor if you have any further queries after reading this leaflet.

Why is my diet important?

Eating the right foods at the right time is fundamental to improving your overall health, as well as helping recovery from illness. Having the right nutrition can reduce symptoms and complications associated with disease as it helps support your liver functioning properly.

Without the right nutrition you are at risk of:

- Developing infections
- Reduced energy
- Reduced muscle strength
- Impaired mood
- Developing encephalopathy (confusion, disorientation, coma)
- Having variceal bleeding (due to pressure in your blood vessels). A varices is a type of varicose vein that develops in veins in the linings of the oesophagus and upper stomach
- Lack of energy between meals
- Vitamin deficiencies
- Protein malnutrition.

What should my diet look like? (only those ticked apply to you)

- Regular meals and snacks every 2-3 hours
- High protein throughout the day
- A late evening carbohydrate snack
- Fruit and vegetables
- Thiamine and vitamin B supplements
- No added salt (aim 4.5 - 5.6 gram of salt per day)
- Calcium + vitamin D supplements for bone health.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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What foods will help me increase my protein intake?

- Meats (such as chicken, beef, pork, mince, lamb, turkey)
- Fish
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Nuts
- Pulses (kidney beans, butter beans, chickpeas, lentils)
- Soya, tofu, quorn.

And how about my carbohydrates?

- Potatoes
- Rice
- Pasta
- Cereals
- Biscuits
- Bread.

What could I eat for my carbohydrate snack?

You will need to eat around 50g of carbohydrates as a bedtime snack to keep your energy levels up overnight. Examples foods that will give you around 50g carbohydrate include:

- 3 chocolate biscuits and a 250ml milkshake
- 40g peanut + raisin mix (unsalted)
- 50g tortilla chips with 250ml milkshake
- 1 medium banana with 125g yoghurt and juice
- 2 scoops ice cream and 125g pot of jelly or ½ pint semi skimmed milk
- 1 pint of milkshake
- 1 pot noodle snack
- 2 slices of toast and jam/honey/peanut butter
- 40g breakfast cereal with milk + banana or fruit juice
- Slice of cake
- 1 bottle juice or milk based supplement
- 6 cream crackers with butter and jam
- 1 large pitta with hummus
- 1 standard sized chocolate bar (50g).

How should I reduce my salt intake?

- Try not to add salt to food when cooking and at meal times
- Avoid tinned soups and foods unless they have low salt versions
- Avoid cured meats (bacon, salami)
- Check the salt content in ready meals
- Try unsalted butter
- Try adding other flavourful substitutes (pepper, spices, lemon, vinegar, oil, seeds, herbs)

Can I drink alcohol?

Your liver may not be able to function properly and so it would not be able to remove toxins from your bloodstream effectively. It is medically advisable to avoid all alcohol for this reason.

How much fluid should I drink

Your doctor may have recommended a daily fluid restriction to aid the body with removing fluid from where it should not be, for example in your abdomen (ascites) or legs. The total fluid allowance includes all drinks, soups and ice lollies.

This is your personal fluid restriction advice:

Fluid restrict _____ litres per day

No fluid restriction

Tips:

Use a measuring jug to monitor how much you drink

Take small sips or use a straw to make drinks last longer

Only drink when you feel thirsty

Try keeping a food diary to keep track of your food intake

Useful websites:

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

<https://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/liver-information/diet-and-liver-disease/cirrhosis-and-advanced-liver-disease/>

This information sheet was compiled by a doctor at Salisbury District Hospital, with reference to the British Liver Trust guidelines and other resources. The information has been reviewed by dieticians and a consultant gastroenterologist.