



COVID-19 and Chronic Liver Disease

Important Information for Patients

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and has produced a global pandemic. The disease seems to be more severe in patients with certain health conditions, people who are over age 65, and residents of nursing homes or long-term care facilities. Risk factors include obesity and long-standing severe diseases of the liver, kidneys, heart, and lungs.ⁱ Patients with cirrhosis,

organ transplant recipients, and people taking immunosuppressive medications may be at higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19. AASLD is committed to providing you with information about the effects of COVID-19 on patients with chronic liver disease and those who need or have received a liver transplant.

What We Know

While we are advancing in our understanding of COVID-19 and its effects on the liver, we still know relatively little about how this disease impacts patients with chronic liver disease. Infection from the

COVID-19 virus may be associated with abnormalities in liver tests, usually in more severe cases. Liver test abnormalities typically would not require specific medicines or treatments. While the effect of COVID-19 on patients with hepatitis B or C is still not well known, patients with these conditions may be at higher risk for poor outcomes.

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, chills, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and new loss of taste or smell.ⁱⁱ

Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. This list does not include all possible symptoms.

The impact of COVID-19 on healthcare systems is enormous. Your healthcare teams are actively making decisions on how best to care for patients with liver disease while trying to minimize the risk of infection from the coronavirus. The pandemic may also have a significant impact on the transplant waiting list. Depending on where you live, there may be fewer liver transplants happening.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

What We Recommend

- If you are experiencing a medical emergency or any symptoms such as confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, fever, chills, chest pain, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of taste or smell, please **call your medical provider** to discuss your care and/or seek medical attention immediately.
- **Visit the [CDC Website](#)** to learn more about ways to protect yourself and others from being infected with the coronavirus, including the use of face masks and frequent hand-washing.
- **Avoid unnecessary exposure to crowds, practice social distancing, and adhere to local guidelines and policies.**
- **Contact your team of providers** to discuss healthcare options, such as telehealth, remote care, and face-to-face visits. If a face-to-face visit is necessary, contact your healthcare system before you arrive to find out about special procedures and precautions.
- **Make sure you have refills available for essential medications** and consider requesting 90-day supplies instead of 30-day supplies.
- If you are taking medications for a liver transplant or autoimmune liver disease, **do not reduce your intake of immunosuppression drugs** unless your healthcare team recommends changes.
- **Ensure that all of your medicolegal documents**, such as your advance directive and power of attorney, are up to date.

What You Should Discuss With Your Healthcare Provider or Team

- Contact your team of healthcare providers to discuss how they plan to care for your liver disease. It is important to continue scheduled visits for regular healthcare maintenance — such as blood draws, radiology, cancer screening, endoscopic procedures, and medically necessary treatments — if allowed under local COVID-19 policies.
- Patients with hepatitis B or C, autoimmune hepatitis, or cirrhosis, as well as liver transplant recipients, should continue all medications as prescribed by their healthcare provider. If you have any of these conditions and are not already taking medication, contact your healthcare provider before starting any medication or treatment.
- If you are on the list for a liver transplant, stay in regular communication with your healthcare team for updates on your status. In many places, liver transplants are continuing safely and donor and recipient testing are in place to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
- Ask your healthcare team whether telework options would be best for you.
- Contact your healthcare team immediately if you think you may be infected with the COVID-19 virus.