

[IMAGE]

Obesity and Diabetes Damage Your Liver

By James P. Meschino, DC, MS

Until recently, hepatocellular carcinoma, a primary malignancy of the liver, was a very rare cancer in North America and most developed countries. However, the recent escalation in the number of overweight, obese and type 2 diabetic individuals in our society has contributed to a corresponding rise in cases of liver cirrhosis and related hepatocellular carcinoma cases.

Being overweight, obese and/or developing type 2 diabetes promotes the deposition of fat into liver cells, primarily due to high circulating insulin levels. As liver cells fill up with fat (triglycerides) it leads to fatty liver degeneration, which later involves inflammation. This condition is known as NASH (non-alcoholic steatohepatitis). As NASH progresses, liver tissue often degenerates into cirrhosis (an irreversible liver condition), whereby liver cells are no longer able to function normally.

Liver Cirrhosis From a Fatty Diet and Obesity

With cirrhosis, a host of signs and symptoms occur due to malfunctioning of liver cells, some of which include failure of the liver, swelling of the legs (edema), accumulation of fluid in the abdomen (ascites), bleeding from veins in the esophagus (varices) and mental confusion (hepatic encephalopathy). Cirrhosis also increases the chances that hepatocellular carcinoma will develop. Thus, hepatocellular carcinoma is on the increase in our society, directly as a result of overweight, obese and type 2 diabetes problems.

It should be noted that heavy chronic alcohol consumption can also cause fatty liver problems with associated liver inflammation (steatohepatitis), which resembles NASH upon blood lab investigation, imaging and biopsy findings.

How Common Is Fatty Liver Disease?

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is currently the most common liver disease in the U.S. and worldwide, affecting an estimated 10-24 percent of the global population. In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that currently, approximately one-half of the U.S. adult population is overweight (BMI >25) and one quarter of the U.S. adult population is obese (BMI >30). That means upwards of 29

million Americans have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, 6.4 million of whom have non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). Even more alarming than these statistics is the fact that non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is occurring among children in the U.S.

The Solution Is Simple

The solution is simply to start eating a low saturated fat / cholesterol / trans fat diet, which should also exclude deep-fried and pan-fried foods. A lower glycemic diet is also helpful, as is the inclusion of regular endurance exercise, all of which pave the way to weight loss, improved blood sugar regulation and lower circulating insulin levels, even in type 2 diabetics. Applying these simple lifestyle modifications often reduces ALT and AST (liver enzymes that elevate when the liver is not functioning properly) into the normal range within 3-6 months as body fat declines.

In many cases, family doctors do not emphasize sufficiently the importance of lifestyle changes to help patients decrease their risk of premature morbidity and mortality associated with NASH. As we know, being diagnosed with hepatocellular carcinoma or even cirrhosis, for that matter, is no walk in the park. Hepatocellular carcinoma is a cancer that is highly preventable. It is a lifestyle-based cancer in our modern society, and thus, I strongly urge you to see overweight problems as a serious health concern.

The truth is that the nutrition and lifestyle plan to overcome obesity, overweight and type 2 diabetes problems is not that difficult to follow and yields tremendous benefits from a health and longevity standpoint, as well as yielding psychosocial benefits to your quality of life.

To see the exact lifestyle program I recommend to my overweight and type 2 diabetic patients, feel free to contact me at [drjames -at- adeeva.com](mailto:drjames@adeeva.com). I am more than happy to e-mail you the exact menu plan I have successfully used with hundreds of patients to help them lose weight and improve their fitness level.

James Meschino, DC, MS, practices in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and is the author of four nutrition books, including *The Meschino Optimal Living Program* and *Break the Weight Loss Barrier*.

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