

COVID-19 and Chronic Liver Disease

More than 4 in 5 people who have symptoms of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, get only mildly sick. But if you have ongoing health issues, including liver disease, the virus may be more likely to leave you seriously ill.

Link Between COVID-19 and Your Liver

The CDC and other experts don't have enough data yet to say how much danger COVID-19 poses for people with liver conditions. But they believe the potential for harm is greater.

A new study of 7,162 people who tested positive for COVID-19 shows that those with any chronic health problems -- such as heart disease, diabetes, lung or kidney disease, or cancer -- make up about 1/3 of the confirmed cases. But they account for more than 2/3 of the hospitalizations.

Among those who have long-term liver disease, 40% were admitted to the hospital, and nearly half of those needed intensive care. The rest recovered at home. Researchers said given the small sample size of 41 people, they can't say for sure if the findings will apply to most people with liver conditions.

In some severe cases of COVID-19, the virus may prevent the liver from working right. One study in China showed that up to half of people with the new coronavirus, named SARS-CoV-2, had liver dysfunction at some point during their illness. It's not clear if the reason lay with the virus or the strong medications used to fight it. Also unclear is if COVID-19 makes an existing liver disease worse.

Serious COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new illness for which we do not have a vaccine or proven treatments.

Most people with COVID-19 symptoms get better on their own. And a sizeable number of people who catch the new coronavirus show no signs. But a small portion of people do fall severely ill or die. They may get severe lung problems, such as pneumonia and ARDS (acute respiratory distress syndrome). Pneumonia can swell your airways and fill your lungs with fluid. That can lead to ARDS, which makes it hard or impossible for you to breathe. Some people may need a ventilator.

Things that may raise your chances of severe COVID-19 include if you:

- Are over 65



- Take immune-blocking medications, a treatment for autoimmune hepatitis and liver transplants
- Are very obese
- Have heart disease
- Have kidney disease with dialysis
- Have a lung disease like asthma or COPD

How to Protect Yourself

You can take these steps to help avoid COVID-19.

First, stay home as much as possible. If you have a higher risk for illness, you might:

- Ask your doctor if you should keep your medical appointments or postpone them. It might be possible to have your visit by phone or on the internet
- Have groceries and essential supplies delivered
- Stock up on your prescriptions or get them via mail order

You should also:

- Avoid close contact with others, especially those who may be sick
- Keep at least 6 feet, or two arms' lengths, between yourself and others
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you touch often, such as phones, TV remotes, countertops, faucets, and light switches

If you think you might have symptoms of COVID-19, like a fever or dry cough, call your doctor.

WebMD Medical Reference

Sources 

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