

# New data show non-alcoholic fatty liver disease will reach epidemic status in the US

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According to new data presented today at the International Liver Congress, the United States (U.S.) could soon be faced with an epidemic of Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)<sup>1</sup>, one of the major contributing factors of chronic liver disease (CLD), considered as one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. The study highlights that if the current rates of obesity and diabetes continue for another two decades, the prevalence of NAFLD in the US is expected to increase by 50% in 2030.

The study analysed pre-existing clinical survey data over a 10 year period (1988-1994, 1999-2004 and 2005-2008), which included 39,500 adults from three survey cycles. Over the three cycles the prevalence of NAFLD doubled from 5.51% to 11.0% respectively. Furthermore, during the first survey cycle (1988-1994) 46.8% of all CLD's was related to NAFLD but by 2005-2008 this had increased to 75.1%. In addition, the prevalence of [obesity](#) and diabetes, the two key risk factors for NAFLD also steadily increased.

Mark Thursz EASL's Vice Secretary commented: "Non-alcoholic [fatty liver disease](#) is fast becoming one of the top concerns for clinicians due to the [obesity epidemic](#) and it's potential to progress to advanced liver disease which significantly impacts on overall liver-related mortality. This data highlights a serious concern for the future, and the enormous increasing health burden of NAFLD. If the obesity epidemic is anything to go by, the U.S. NAFLD epidemic may have a ripple effect worldwide. It is imperative that health systems continue to drive effective

educational programmes to reinforce awareness among the general public to alert them of the risks of obesity and promote the importance of diet and exercise".

NAFLD is the term used to describe fat build-up in [liver cells](#) in people who do not drink alcohol excessively and is the most common persistent liver disorder in Western countries with an estimated overall prevalence of 20-30%.<sup>2</sup>

NAFLD encompasses a spectrum of liver disease associated with insulin resistance, diabetes and obesity and as such people most at risk of NAFLD are those who are obese, have insulin resistance associated with diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol.<sup>3</sup>

#### **More information: References**

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3. Fatty Liver. Patient UK. Available at [www.patient.co.uk/doctor/Steat...is-\(Fatty-Liver\).htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/doctor/Steat...is-(Fatty-Liver).htm) . Accessed March 2011.

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