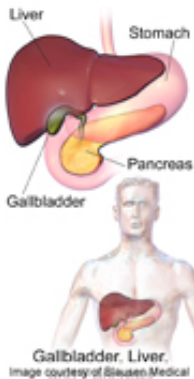


Liver disease may raise risk of heart problems, study says

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People with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease should undergo coronary screening, researcher says.

(HealthDay)—A new study adds to growing evidence of a link between a common liver disease associated with obesity and high risk for heart disease.

People with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease have an accumulation of fat in the liver that is not caused by [drinking alcohol](#). The fat can cause inflammation and scarring in the liver and progress to life-threatening illness.

The new findings "suggest that patients with coronary artery disease should be screened for liver disease, and likewise [patients with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease] should be evaluated for coronary artery

disease," said Dr. Rajiv Chhabra, a [gastroenterologist](#) at Saint Luke's Health System's Liver Disease Management Center in Kansas City, Mo.

Researchers looked at upper-abdominal CT scans of nearly 400 patients and found that those with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease were more likely to have [coronary artery disease](#). The effect of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease was stronger than other more traditional risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking, [high blood pressure](#), diabetes, high cholesterol, metabolic syndrome and being male.

Chhabra conducted the study with a colleague, Dr. John Helzberg. Their findings were presented at the American Gastroenterological Association's recent annual meeting.

Current treatments for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease include diet changes, exercise and increased monitoring.

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is the most common liver disorder in Western countries, and is of growing concern among doctors due to rising rates of obesity and diabetes.

"If current trends continue, the prevalence of [non-alcoholic [fatty liver disease](#)] is expected to increase to 40 percent of the population by 2020," Helzberg said in a Saint Luke's Health System news release.

Data and conclusions presented at meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information: The American Liver Foundation has more about [non-alcoholic fatty liver disease](#).

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