

# Waist not weight—the key to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease

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A new study presented today demonstrates that a build-up of fat around the waist can cause more serious complications than obesity in the development of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). The study was presented at The International Liver Congress™ 2016 in Barcelona, Spain.

NAFLD is a condition in which [fat](#) builds up in the liver. In some cases this accumulation of fat can cause inflammation of the liver and eventually lead to permanent scarring (cirrhosis), which can seriously impair the liver's ability to function. NAFLD is a condition strongly linked to obesity, with a reported prevalence as high as 80% in obese patients.<sup>1</sup> The 'lean' form of the disease can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and even death,<sup>2,3</sup> and has been reported in 16% of individuals with a normal body weight.<sup>1</sup>

"While NAFLD is commonly associated with obesity, research has highlighted that a percentage of patients are not actually obese", said Dr Rosa Lombardi, Unit of Internal Medicine, Policlinico Hospital, University of Milan, Italy and [lead](#) study author. "This is the first study to show that patients with lean-NAFLD who have increased levels of waist fat can in fact be at greater risk than obese patients with NAFLD."

The researchers in the Italian study evaluated the features of lean-NAFLD in 323 patients with biopsy-proven NAFLD. Subjects were divided according to BMI (

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