

What are the Signs of Liver Disease



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The liver is the largest internal organ, and surprisingly powerful. However, some liver conditions leave permanent damage, and in these cases, early diagnosis and swift treatment can mean the difference between an uncomfortable (but treatable) illness and a life-threatening emergency.

Like many progressive diseases, you may not notice any signs or symptoms of liver disease in the early stages. As liver function begins to decline, you may begin to notice some physical changes in certain areas of your body.

1. Abdominal Swelling: A swollen abdomen can point to a condition called ascites, where liver malfunction leads to an imbalance of proteins and other compounds, and fluid builds up in the tissues. Sometimes swelling occurs in the hands, feet, and ankles, as gravity draws the excess fluid down to the extremities.

2. Bruising: A damaged liver produces fewer of the proteins necessary for blood clotting, which means you may bleed and bruise more easily.

3. Fatigue and Weakness: It can be easy to dismiss fatigue and lethargy as a normal side effect of a stressful life, but severe exhaustion could point to low blood oxygen levels and waste accumulation.

4. Loss of Appetite: Nausea, a disinterest in food, and weight loss are some early symptoms of liver problems. In fact, the initial stages of hepatitis often bring flu-like symptoms, including digestive discomfort.

5. Jaundice: As liver function declines and waste can no longer be eliminated from the body efficiently, the bile pigment called bilirubin can build up in the bloodstream. In turn, the skin and eyes can take on a yellowish color, urine will appear darker, and stools will appear lighter.

6. Abdominal Pain: When cirrhosis begins to cause pain, it typically comes in the upper right abdomen, or just under the lower right ribs. The pain can be throbbing or stabbing, and it may come and go.

7. Personality Changes: Cognitive issues can develop when toxins accumulate in the blood and move to the brain. Confusion and problems with concentration are often the first signs of toxin overload, but they can lead to forgetfulness, changes in sleeping habits, and unresponsiveness.

8. Persistent Vomiting: While nausea and upset stomach are common early symptoms of liver disease, but as your liver's ability to eliminate toxins decreases, your digestive distress will likely increase. Ongoing nausea is a reaction to excess waste products in the body, and unexplained vomiting is often linked to liver problems.

If you would like more information on liver disease treatment for your patient, contact us at the physician referral line below.

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For an appointment, please call **522-4234**
For Physician Referrals, call **522-4444**

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