

About Liver Canada & Your Liver

Who we are

Liver Canada was first established in 1969 out of the passion and concern of a group of business leaders and doctors who believed that liver disease needed a champion. Since then, we've relentlessly driven advancements in research, treatment, and support.

With the help of donors, volunteers, researchers, health professionals, corporate supporters, and community members, we are changing the future of liver health for those living in Canada.



What we do



Provide support to those impacted by liver disease via our National Help Line



Advocate at all levels of government for improved access to liver care



Provide education and resources on liver health and liver diseases



Support Canadian researchers in finding new treatments and cures

Our Mission:

Transforming the future of liver health
– one person, one breakthrough, one
liver disease at a time.

Our Vision:

Liver health for all.

Our Core Values:



All Embracing

We foster an inclusive and diverse environment where everyone feels seen, heard, valued, and respected.



Authentic

We bring you trustworthy and timely information for all forms of liver diseases.



Compassionate

We exist to provide compassionate and stigma-free support for all people living in Canada.



Transformative

We embrace an innovative and evolving lens to create the best outcomes for liver health.

Our Programs

Liver Canada offers a range of programs to support, educate, and empower those affected by liver diseases. Whether you're living with a liver disease or caring for someone who is, we're here to help. Here's how:



Patient support

Whether you have general liver health questions, need help navigating the healthcare system, or just want someone to talk to, our patient support team is here for you! Call our toll-free help line at **1-800-563-5483** or submit a message at **liver.ca/contact-us**.

Liver health education

Attend a monthly webinar, browse our Information Hub, or try a new recipe from our recipe bank. Find it all and more at **liver.ca**.



Peer support

You are not alone! Our peer support network provides patients with a safe space to share their experiences. We aim to connect you with people who have similar stories to build meaningful connections within the liver community. Fill out the inquiry form at **liver.ca/contact-us**.

Pre-transplant navigation

Liver transplants can feel overwhelming, but you're not alone. Our pre-transplant navigation program offers personalized guidance, helpful resources, and support to create a living donor campaign and connect with potential donors in your network. Fill out the inquiry form at **liver.ca/contact-us** for more information.



School program

We believe education is key to lifelong liver health. Our school program delivers fun, interactive workshops to students in Grades 5–10, providing them with the knowledge they need to make healthy choices and prevent chronic liver disease.

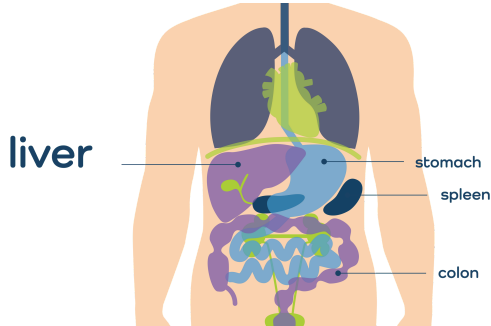
Wellness with MASLD

Our six-week virtual program helps people living with metabolic-dysfunction associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) make lasting lifestyle changes to improve their liver health. With fitness sessions, cooking demos, and peer support, participants gain the tools to take charge of their health. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram **[@LiverCanada](https://www.facebook.com/LiverCanada)** to find out when registration opens for the next cohort.



Your Liver

The liver is a powerhouse organ and one that should be celebrated for its superhero strength!



The liver is your body's largest internal organ, weighing about 3 to 3.5 pounds (we like to say it's the size of a rugby ball), and is one of the most important organs in the body. It's located on your right side, just under your rib cage. Your liver's top job is to clean the body, and it's essential to your life.

Your liver is a complex chemical factory, processing everything you eat, breathe in, and rub on your skin. In fact, the liver performs over 500 daily functions that are vital to life. Here are a few of them:

- Filtering toxins from your blood
- Managing blood clotting
- Making bile to digest fat
- Regulating the balance of hormones, including sex hormones, thyroid hormones, cortisone, and other adrenal hormones
- Turning extra glucose into glycogen
- Storing sugar for energy
- Making protein for blood plasma
- Managing the supply of essential vitamins and minerals, including iron and copper

Your liver is a resilient and determined organ – might we even say it's the body's top performer?! – and it will continue to work even when it's two-thirds damaged. It's also the only organ in the human body that can regenerate itself.

What could go wrong with your liver?

Because of its wide-ranging responsibilities and exposure to the gut, poisons in food, and bacteria, a healthy liver can come under attack from viruses, contaminants, infections, toxic substances, and other factors. Continual exposure to these "attackers" can cause inflammation and destroy liver cells. As it constantly tries to repair itself, the liver gradually gets thicker – or scarred. If your liver is always in "fight mode", it can eventually stop working well. Many conditions can affect the liver's health. We refer to these conditions as liver diseases. They range from mild to serious and even life-threatening.

Common signs and symptoms of liver disease

Symptoms of liver disease are not always obvious, and they can sometimes be confused with other health problems. In some cases, you may have no symptoms at all, as liver disease often develops silently in the early stages. Risk factors vary across the 100 forms of liver diseases.

Here are some common signs and symptoms of liver disease. *Please note that this is not an inclusive list.*

- A general feeling of unwell and chronic tiredness
- Yellowing of the whites of the eyes and the skin (jaundice)
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling sick (nausea) and vomiting
- Pale coloured stools or very dark/black tarry stools
- Dark urine
- Blotchy red palms
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Tendency to bruise easily and difficulty in stopping small bleeds
- Intensely itchy skin
- Spider-like small blood capillaries on the skin above waist level
- Increased sensitivity to alcohol
- Swelling, tenderness, or pain in the liver area (right side of your body)



There are over 100 forms of liver disease.

Liver disease can be caused by a variety of factors including viruses, genetics, toxins, transfer of bodily fluids and blood, contaminants, toxic substances like alcohol, and unknown causes.

Common liver diseases

Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease

Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) is defined as the buildup of extra fat in liver cells, that is not caused by alcohol consumption. It is normal for the liver to contain some fat, however, if more than 5% of your liver's weight is fat, that's when you're likely to be diagnosed with MASLD. MASLD is the most common form of liver disease in Canada, affecting at least 25% of all adults.

Viral hepatitis

Viral hepatitis is a group of infections that cause inflammation in the liver. Over time, this can lead to liver scarring, liver failure, or even liver cancer. There are several main types of viral hepatitis.

In Canada, the most common types of viral hepatitis are A, B, and C, while hepatitis D is considered rare. Each type is caused by a different virus and is transmitted in different ways. Some are short-term infections, while others can become chronic and lead to serious liver damage.

Liver tumours and liver cancer

A liver tumour is a mass or growth in the liver that results when liver cells begin to grow in an abnormal way. The liver has the incredible capacity to regenerate, which is why abnormal growths can occur relatively easily.

When the liver is injured, it works hard to repair itself by making new cells. Sometimes, changes (mutations) can happen in the genes during this process. Over time, these changes can lead to cells overgrowing out of control and may result in cancer.

Liver cirrhosis

Cirrhosis happens when long-term liver damage leads to extensive scarring that can no longer heal. There is no cure for cirrhosis and damage isn't fully reversible. Damage can occur from an underlying liver disease such as MASLD, toxic hepatitis, viral hepatitis, bile duct disorders, inherited liver conditions such as Wilson's disease and hemochromatosis and metabolic disorders such as glycogen storage disorders.

How can you protect your liver

Many forms of liver disease are preventable and there are many small steps that you can take to reduce your risk and protect those around you. Love your liver – here's how:

-  **Eat a balanced diet.** Focus on eating colourful fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
-  **Practice safe sexual connections.** Use protection and get vaccinated against hepatitis B and C.
-  **Participate in physical activity.** Find a form of exercise or movement that you enjoy and practice it daily.
-  **Limit alcohol.** When it comes to alcohol less is best. If you're living with liver disease or pregnant, you should avoid drinking alcohol.
-  **Drink coffee.** Drinking up to 3-4 cups of black coffee can help your liver perform its daily functions.
-  **Use medications wisely.** Ask your doctor to make sure your medication and supplements are right for you.
-  **Take care while traveling.** Practice food and water safety and get vaccinated against hepatitis A.
-  **Avoid toxic substances.** Protect your skin and airways from toxins by wearing protective equipment when cleaning and avoiding smoking.

Many liver diseases can be avoided with a liver-friendly lifestyle, and some early-stage conditions may even be reversed.



Questions to ask your doctor

Whether you want to learn more about your liver or simply wish to open up a conversation about liver health, it can sometimes be tricky to know what to ask your doctor or healthcare provider. We've put together some common questions that you can bring to your next appointment:

General liver health

- How can I prevent liver disease?
- What signs and symptoms of liver disease should I look out for?
- What lifestyle changes can I make to support my liver health (diet, exercise, substance use)?
- Based on my physical examination and medical history, am I at risk of liver disease?

Testing

- Do I qualify for a preventative liver health test like a FibroScan?
- What do liver health tests measure?

Test results

- How long will it take to receive results?
- What can I do for my liver health while I await results?
- What's the next course of action based on my results?


Diagnosis

- What caused my form of liver disease (e.g. genetics, viral infection, lifestyle, etc.)?
- Will my liver disease progress?
- How will my liver disease diagnosis impact my overall health? Does it make me susceptible to other diseases like diabetes or Crohn's and colitis?

Talking to your doctor is the first step in advocating for your liver health. Act early to keep your liver health on track.



You are not alone in your diagnosis. Liver Canada is here for you for every step of your liver health journey. Contact our patient support team via our Toll Free Help Line at 1-800-563-5483.



**Liver disease affects 1 in 4 Canadians.
From newborns to older adults.
It can impact anyone, at any stage of life.**

To help fund liver health support services, education and research, visit: liver.ca/ways-to-give.

**Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn!
@LiverCanada**

National Office:

101-3100 Steeles Ave East
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Toll Free Help Line: 1-800-563-5483

Website: liver.ca

