

## Nutrition in chronic liver disease

### Preventing weight loss

Chronic liver disease is often associated with muscle and body fat loss. This may be difficult to detect because of fluid gains around your stomach/legs. A high protein diet is important for people with chronic liver disease as the protein is used to maintain muscles and body tissues (including the liver) and to keep the body working normally.

To help prevent muscle and fat loss, you need to eat foods high in protein and energy.

### Ideas to increase protein and energy

- Eat 6-8 smaller meals and snacks throughout the day rather than 3 large meals, particularly if you have a small appetite or feel full quickly.
- Have an energy-rich snack just before bed.
- Use oils in cooking, frying and baking and onto vegies and salads.
- Add eggs, legumes, yoghurt, cream or low-salt cheese to your meat dishes or salads.
- Replace tea, coffee or water with fluids that provide energy (such as milk, juice, cordial or soft drink).

Include at least one food from each of these columns at each meal or snack.

Energy foods	Protein foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rolled oats, wheat or oat bran</li> <li>• Pasta, rice, noodles</li> <li>• Potato, sweet potato, corn</li> <li>• Unsalted butter/margarine, olive oil, sunflower oil, canola oil</li> <li>• Cream/ mayonnaise, avocado</li> <li>• Ice cream</li> <li>• Fruit, dried fruit and fruit juice</li> <li>• Sugar and sugary products including jam, honey, golden syrup, soft drinks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat, chicken, pork, fresh fish, lamb</li> <li>• Milk, milk powder and soy milk</li> <li>• Yoghurt, custard</li> <li>• Cottage, ricotta, bocconcini, Swiss cheese</li> <li>• Tinned fish in spring water/oil</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Unsalted nuts and seeds (including pastes)</li> <li>• Dried legumes (lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, soup mixes)</li> </ul>

Full cream milk is a great base for nourishing drinks. Fortified soymilk (e.g. *So Good*) is also suitable. To make your milk higher in protein and calories, add other ingredients such as ice cream, milk powder or a variety of flavourings.

There are a variety of special nutrition supplements may be able to help increase your energy and protein intake. Talk to your dietitian about these, if required.

## Fluid and salt

As liver disease progresses, excess fluid can build up around your stomach (ascites) and in the feet and legs (oedema). If this occurs, it becomes very important to limit the amount of salt (sodium) you consume. Because salt acts like a sponge in your body, if you reduce the amount of salt you eat you can limit the amount of fluid that stays in your body.

Most salt (75%) comes from processed and convenience foods. Common high salt foods to avoid:

- deli meats (e.g. bacon, sausage, corned beef, salami)
- smoked products (e.g. smoked salmon, ham)
- canned foods (e.g. baked beans, tinned spaghetti, soup, stews)
- salted foods (e.g. salted nuts, olives, cheese, pickled foods)
- fast foods (e.g. pizza, hamburgers, meat pies, Chinese, Indian food)
- sauces, stock, seasoning (e.g. soy sauce, gravy, powdered soups).

When shopping:

- buy fresh foods without salt: fruits and vegetables, fresh meat, chicken, fish, eggs, porridge, plain flour, rice, pasta
- choose 'low salt' or 'no added salt' products
- Check the nutrition panel: aim for salt (sodium) less than **120mg per 100g**. Avoid foods with more than **400mg per 100g**.

Instead of adding salt, use:

- pepper, lemon juice, lime juice, vinegar
- garlic, chilli, onion, fresh ginger, spring onions
- fresh or dried herbs – basil, oregano, mint, rosemary, thyme, parsley, chives, sage, tarragon
- spices – cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, cumin.

## Phone apps

To help keep you on track:

“**Food Switch**” can assist with low salt swaps or “**Easy Diet Diary**” can help track your salt intake for the day.

**For further information contact your Dietitian:** \_\_\_\_\_