



UNITED GASTROENTEROLOGISTS

Patient Education Sheet

Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and Fatty Liver

What is nonalcoholic steatohepatitis? — Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) is a long-term condition that affects the liver. The liver is a big organ in the upper right side of the belly. When people have NASH, fat tissue builds up in their liver, and the liver gets inflamed.

People who drink too much alcohol can get a condition similar to NASH. But NASH happens in people who do not drink alcohol or drink only a little alcohol.

What causes NASH? — Doctors do not know what causes NASH. They do know that NASH happens more often in some people, such as those who:

- Are overweight
- Have a condition called diabetes mellitus, which causes blood sugar levels to get too high
- Have high cholesterol
- Take certain medicines

What are the symptoms of NASH? — Most people with NASH have no symptoms.

Your doctor might suspect that you have NASH from the results of your routine blood tests.

Will I need more tests? — Yes. If your doctor suspects that you have NASH, you will likely have:

- More blood tests
- An imaging test of the liver, such as an ultrasound, CT, or MRI scan — Imaging tests create pictures of the inside of the body.

How is NASH treated? — There is no cure for NASH.

Your doctor will treat your other medical conditions. For example, he or she can:

- Help you create a weight loss plan, if you are overweight — If your doctor recommends that you lose weight, it's important to do this slowly. Do not lose more than 3.5 pounds (1.6 kilograms) a week.
- Treat your high blood sugar, if you have high blood sugar
- Treat your high cholesterol, if you have high cholesterol

Does NASH get worse over time? — **NASH does not usually get worse over time. But sometimes, it leads to serious scarring of the liver, called “cirrhosis.”** Cirrhosis can cause different symptoms, such as swelling in the legs, trouble breathing, or feeling tired. If you get cirrhosis, your doctor will talk with you about different possible treatments.

Do I need to follow up with my doctor? — Yes. People who have NASH need to see their doctor for regular check-ups. Your doctor will do follow-up tests on a regular basis. These usually include blood tests. For more information visit www.uptodate.com/patients

