

# Healthy Eating Guidelines for Non Alcohol-Related Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) (Adults)

Non alcohol-related fatty liver disease (NAFLD), also referred to as metabolic dysfunction-associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD), results when excess fat is stored in the liver when you drink little or no alcohol. Too much fat in your liver can affect your health and can lead to inflammation and liver damage.

Diabetes, high cholesterol and triglyceride (type of fat in the blood) levels and carrying extra weight are some of the risk factors for developing and worsening NAFLD.

You can help manage NAFLD by combining eating well and being active. This fact sheet provides healthy eating tips to help you reduce the amount of fat in your liver. Talk to a registered dietitian who can work with you to develop a meal plan that is right for you.



## Steps you can take

1. Follow an eating pattern that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains and protein foods to get the nutrients you need for good health. The Mediterranean diet is one example of a healthy eating pattern. Some tips include:

- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. Choose fresh, frozen or canned with little or no added sugar, salt or fat. Include skins when possible such as peach and potatoes skins for added fibre.
- Choose whole grains that are high in fibre such as oats, barley, brown or wild rice, quinoa, whole grain bread and pasta.
- Select a variety of protein foods including peas, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, tofu, fortified soy beverage, fish, eggs, skinless poultry, lean meat like loin cuts, lower fat milk and dairy products including yogurt and cheese.
  - Choose plant sources more often and limit highly processed foods that are high in saturated fat such as frozen, breaded and fried ready-to-eat products and processed meat like bacon, hot dogs, sausages and bologna.

- Choose foods rich in omega-3 fat found in fatty fish like herring, mackerel, salmon and trout, ground flaxseed and walnuts. There is not enough research available to know if omega-3 supplements help fatty liver disease. They are not recommended at this time.
- Limit foods and beverages that contain added sugar, including fructose, especially when they provide excess energy.
  - Choose water, unsweetened coffee or black or herbal tea instead of sweetened beverages such as sodas or pop, fruit drinks, specialty coffees and teas.
  - Choose fresh fruit and vegetables, low fat yogurt or whole grain low fat crackers instead of candy, cookies, pastries and other sweets.

2. Talk to your health care provider and dietitian if you need help to manage health conditions you have. This may include help to keep your blood glucose (sugar) levels under control if you have diabetes and a gradual, 7-10% weight loss if you carry extra weight. This can help reduce liver fat and improve liver enzyme levels. A dietitian can work with you to provide a meal plan that is specific to your needs.

3. Aim to be active by being less sedentary and choosing activities you enjoy and will continue to do. Physical activity helps decrease liver fat and improve insulin resistance. Check with your health care provider before you start a new exercise program.

4. Talk to your health care provider or dietitian about the amounts of alcohol, coffee and supplements that are right for you.

- Drinking alcohol may further stress and damage your liver.
- Drinking coffee may help in reducing liver fibrosis, but more research is needed. Health Canada recommends no more than 400 mg of caffeine a day, which is about 2-3 cups of coffee depending on how the coffee is brewed.
- Some vitamins, minerals or herbal supplements may cause liver damage.
- Probiotics and synbiotics to improve gut health and liver enzyme levels are being studied. No specific supplement or dose level can be recommended at this time.



## **Additional Resources**



## Additional Resources

- Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- Physical Activity and Your Health <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/physical-activity-your-health.html>
- The Mediterranean Diet: A Guide to Healthy Eating <https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8DmXgE=&PreviewHandout=bA==>
- Added Sugars; Healthy Eating Tips <https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8HrUAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

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## Notes

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