



Patient & Family Guide
2021

Chronic Liver Disease and Your Risk for Liver Cancer



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If you have chronic liver disease, you may be at higher risk for liver cancer.

What is hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC)?

HCC is the most common type of liver cancer.

What are the risk factors for HCC?

Risk factors increase your chance of getting HCC.

The following risk factors increase your risk:

- › Cirrhosis (permanent scarring of the liver)
- › Hepatitis B or C infection
- › Age
- › Male
- › Alcohol use (any amount)

The longer you have had liver cirrhosis, the greater risk you have of getting HCC (especially if you are under age 75).

What are the symptoms of HCC?

- Since there are often no symptoms of HCC until it is advanced, it is important to talk with a member of your health care team about your risk.
- Talk with your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms of advanced HCC:
 - › Yellowing of the skin, eyes, or mucous membranes (jaundice)

- › Pain and bloating in the upper right side of the stomach area that does not go away
- › Pain near your right shoulder blade that does not go away
- › Rectal bleeding (from your bum)
- › Vomiting (throwing up) with blood

How will my health care provider know if I have HCC?

Your health care provider will check for HCC using these tests:

- › Physical exam
- › Ultrasound
- › Blood tests
- › CT scan or MRI

What is the treatment for HCC?

There are many treatment options for HCC. Your health care team will decide the best treatment for you based on your health, how advanced the cancer is, and the location and size of your tumour.

Can I prevent HCC?

The best way to prevent HCC is to protect yourself from hepatitis B and C. If you already have hepatitis B and/or C, it is important to keep your liver healthy.

What can I do to keep my liver healthy?

- If you have hepatitis C, get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- If you have hepatitis B, learn how to prevent hepatitis C.
- Talk with your health care provider about treatments for hepatitis B and C.
- Keep all of your doctor appointments.
- Ask your primary health care provider about checking for HCC.
- Avoid taking medicines that may damage your liver. Ask your primary health care provider if you are not sure.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.