

# Being Active when You Have Chronic Liver Disease

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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes!

People with chronic liver disease (CLD) lose stamina and strength, get out of breath easily and are at risk of heart problems and certain types of cancer. Being active is a great way to counter those effects. You can lower your blood pressure, increase your strength and muscle mass as well as boost your energy.

Exercise is safe for most people who have CLD. If you are being evaluated for a liver transplant, you may need to work around your scheduled testing, procedures (e.g., paracentesis) and office visits.



## Getting Started

### Keep It Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout your day. It all adds up.

### Talk with Your Doctor

Talk to your health care provider before you start a new physical activity program. Ask about other medical conditions or drugs you're taking that might affect

### Build a Plan

Ask to meet with a clinical exercise physiologist or a member of the health care team who can go over your physical activity and care plan.

### Motivation

What will help you stick with an activity plan? Exercising with a friend or in a supervised program or fitness center? Is there a better time of day? What's fun?

### CLD Tips and Cautions

Physical activity should ideally be performed on non-procedure days.

Avoid exercise immediately after your procedures as well.

Heart rate may be an unreliable way to measure your activity intensity. Use feelings of effort instead (light to medium).

It's ok to drink when you feel thirsty. Don't drink excessively because of your liver disease. Limit salty foods to help you not be so thirsty or retain fluid.

If you have an abdominal hernia, you may exercise with it, but avoid abdominal exercises such as sit-ups or crunches.

# Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Slowly build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling or water exercise). You'll improve your stamina and heart health.

| What?                 | How often?    | How hard?                     | How much?                                                                   |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Any rhythmic activity | 3-5 days/week | Fairly light to somewhat hard | Start with a few minutes. Gradually build up to 20-60 minutes over the day. |

**Remember:** If you need to, start by doing 3 minutes of activity and then rest for 3 minutes. Repeat 3-4 times. Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. To lose weight, do twice as much activity

## To stay safe and injury free:

- Start with light to fairly light effort.
- Gradually increase your time spent being active. Then increase your pace.
- Warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.

# Strength Training

Strength training, e.g., working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and helps your overall health. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

| What?                                                                                                                           | How often?                             | How hard?                                                   | How much?                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair sit-to-stands) | 2-3 Days/week<br>*Rest day in between! | Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort. | 10-15 repetitions (for each major muscle group) 1-2 sets |

**Remember:** If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional or talk to your health care provider. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

## Strength Training Cautions:

- Slowly increase how much you lift and how often.
- Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. This causes your blood pressure to go up.

# Other Types of Physical Activity

Aerobic activity and strength training are at the heart of a program for those with chronic liver disease. But you may enjoy and benefit from these other options.

## Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-3 days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for a total of 60 seconds (can do 10-30 second stretches). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.

## Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker to measure your progress and stay motivated. Count your steps daily for the first week. Slowly build up to 7,000-9,000 steps/day.

## Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates

All help with balance, strength and are relaxing too.

## Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball. Dance. Tend your garden. Play outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.

## More Help

Go to [www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro](http://www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro) to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.**

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