Fatty Liver Disease Is Common Among British Young Adults

Researchers followed a group of teenagers over time and found that their rate of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease rose in young adulthood.

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Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is common among British young adults, a finding that researchers are concerned may foretell a public health crisis.

Presenting their findings at the 53rd International Liver Congress in Vienna, researchers at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom analyzed data on 4,021 young adults who had a median age of 24 years old and were members of the Children of the 90s birth cohort. Previously, investigators had assessed these young people for NAFLD when they were teenagers and found that 2.5 percent of them had the condition.

Out of 3,128 cohort members who had liver scans available for analysis, 76 (2.4 percent) had at least some liver fibrosis (scarring) and eight (0.3 percent) had advanced fibrosis. A total of 680 (20.8 percent) of them had steatosis, which is the accumulation of fat in the liver and is indicative of NAFLD. About half of that group, or 331 people (10.1 percent of the overall cohort), had Stage 3, or severe, steatosis.

Liver damage, the researchers found, was associated with higher liver enzymes, fibrosis scores and controlled attenuated parameter (CAP) scores, a measurement of fatty changes in the liver. Higher fibrosis scores were associated with higher CAP scores. Higher steatosis grades, total cholesterol levels and triglycerides were associated with higher LDL cholesterol. Also, a higher body mass index was associated with higher fibrosis and CAP scores.

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