NAFLD May Be Deadly for People With Type 2 Diabetes

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People living with type 2 diabetes who have been admitted to the hospital with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) face a substantially increased risk of death compared with those without the condition, says a new study presented this month at the Diabetes UK Professional Conference 2017.

The report backs a strong association between the two metabolic issues and indicates that an NAFLD comorbidity may significantly worsen health outcomes among people with blood sugar disorders, Medscape reports.

Specifically, the trial of more than 130,000 type 2 diabetes patients showed that those hospitalized for NAFLD had double the risk of mortality from all causes, including an increased death risk from heart problems, liver cancer and other noncancer causes. NAFLD admission was also linked to an increased risk of a cardiovascular disease in type 2 diabetes patients, even after major risk factors such as age, sex, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or smoking are removed from the equation.

During the presentation, researchers highlighted two previous diabetes studies, one from 2007 and another from 2015, that also showed that NAFLD was associated with an increase in all-cause mortality. While fatty liver disease has only recently been associated with type 2 diabetes and obesity, this study corroborates research on their links.

Study authors also noted that up to 70 percent of people with type 2 diabetes today have fatty liver disease. This isn't necessarily surprising, since the two diseases share multiple risk factors, including obesity, poor diet and sedentary lifestyles. However, unlike diabetes, there is currently no available treatment for NAFLD — though studies show that lifestyle changes, such as weight loss, increased physical activity and alcohol restriction may help people reverse the condition in its early stages.