Weight Loss Is Tied to Improved Liver Enzymes in Those With Hep B

Normalizing ALT liver enzyme levels is associated with positive long-term outcomes.

December 4, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

Among people with hepatitis B virus (HBV) who have a fully suppressed viral load thanks to antiviral treatment, losing weight is associated with the normalization of ALT liver enzyme levels, which is itself associated with positive long-term health outcomes, InfectiousDiseaseAdvisor reports.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, a research team led by Jinlin Hou, MD, of Nanfang Hospital in Guangzhou, China, conducted a prospective cohort study of 1,965 people with HBV who were treated with nucleoside/nucleotide analog medications and had sustained an undetectable viral load for at least six months.

During a median follow-up time of 18.4 months, one third of the cohort members experienced elevation of their ALT enzymes, which can signal liver inflammation. Having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or greater (meaning they were at least overweight), being younger and having liver cirrhosis were each independently associated with an increased risk of ALT elevation over time.

By the end of the study's follow-up period, 89 (4.8%) of the cohort members reverted to a low BMI (below 25) and 92 (5.0%) developed a high BMI (25 or greater). Compared with having a persistently high BMI, reverting to a low BMI was associated with a 62% lower likelihood of developing ALT elevations. And compared with having a persistently low BMI, developing a high BMI was associated with a 78% increased likelihood of developing ALT elevations.

"High BMI is an independent predictor for ALT elevation after complete HBV DNA suppression," the study authors concluded. "Improvement of BMI may have a beneficial effect on ALT normalization and even long-term outcomes."

To read the InfectiousDiseaseAdvisor article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.
