Can You Exercise Safely with Liver Cirrhosis

March 7, 2019 By Karen Hoyt

Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen's I Help C blog.

When my liver failed with hepatitis C, my doctor made me quit exercises. No weights, no cycling, no running. I had to prove that I would be super careful not to cause another varices bleed. Ascites was a problem too, and low platelets. Once I got my body calmed down and my Meld was below 15, I was allowed to begin working out again, but very slowly. Can you exercise safely with liver cirrhosis? No matter what the cause, Nash, fatty, autoimmune, hepatitis, PBC, PBS, you can. If you don't have advanced disease, these are good tips to keep your muscles strong, and your heart and lungs healthy for many years to come.

NOTE: My general health was good when my liver failed from Hep C. BEFORE you start, be sure to get permission from your doctor. If you approach exercise with caution, it's possible you'll get the go ahead.

Safe Exercise with Liver Cirrhosis
Weights – If you have liver disease, you'll be a light weight to start with. I had to keep it under 5 lbs. Otherwise, the risk of creating a new varices was too high. Of course, popping one could always bring on a bleed out and those can be life threatening. I don't want to scare you, but I learned the hard way and am super lucky to be here. Low weights with lots of reps can keep you strong. You won't lose a lot of muscle mass, and you can continue to eat healthy protein that your liver can metabolize.

Nutrition – Eating protein that is safe for your liver is a no brainer. Of course you can go totally plant based. I mixed in some meat from the start due to anemia. Watch your lab numbers and if your UREA and metabolic panel are within limits, your doctor may allow you to eat meat too. In spite of eating good protein, I got a bit soft. Ask your doctor how many grams of protein you should get per day and go from there. Get all the nutrients you need by eating healthy veggies, fruit, and protein.

Cardio – Walking is always the best. It can help you beat fatigue and keep your energy level up. It's proven to help hour heart health and is safe. Cycling and running are great options too. A helmet is a smart idea if you have low platelets. Any type of head injury could cause excessive

bleeding. Running may require more energy than you've got with advanced disease. I always ran when I could and think it helped. I'm no longer a runner since the diagnosis.

Can You Exercise Safely with Liver Cirrhosis ? To find the answer, click here to read the rest of this blog. Be sure to check out Karen's stretching and yoga video.

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