What’s the Difference between NAFL, NAFLD and NASH?

September 19, 2020 By Connie M. Welch

Liver disease can come in many forms; many can lead to liver damage. Three leading forms of liver disease are from fatty liver conditions, NAFL (Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver), NAFLD (Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease), and NASH (Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis). Fatty liver disease is often undetected and silent because little to no symptoms occur until liver damage is significant.

NAFL
Fatty liver disease begins when fat builds up in the liver, but with little to no inflammation or liver damage. This condition is called, NAFL (Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver).

NAFLD
NAFLD is Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. It is one of the leading causes of liver disease in the U.S. Patients who have hepatitis C and other liver disease conditions can develop NAFLD, as well as people who have never had any other liver disease condition.

NAFLD (Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease) is a fat buildup in the liver which can cause liver damage. In the United States, it is estimated that between 30 to 40 percent of adults have NAFLD.

Risk Factors of NAFLD & NASH
According to the Mayo Clinic, NAFLD is more common in people who are over-weight. Other health issues can sometimes occur with NAFLD, such as;

- High Cholesterol
- High triglycerides in the blood
- Pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes
- Other metabolic conditions
- Sleep Apnea
- Overweight or Obesity especially fat concentrated in the abdomen
- Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid)
- Hypopituitarism (underactive pituitary gland)

- Polycystic ovary syndrome

Symptoms for NAFLD
NAFLD typically has little to no symptoms. Some may occur such as;

- Fatigue
- Enlarged Liver
- Pain in the upper right abdomen

NASH
NAFLD can develop into a more serious form of fatty liver disease called NASH (Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis). NASH can develop more severe liver damage or scarring known as cirrhosis, which can impair liver function. Patients with NASH who have cirrhosis, have a higher risk of developing liver cancer and may need a liver transplant.

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, “Experts estimate about 20 percent of people with NAFLD have NASH.”

Symptoms of NASH
Symptoms of NASH and Cirrhosis (advanced liver scarring) may include;

- Fatigue
- Swelling in the Abdomen (Ascites)
- Enlarged blood vessels just beneath the skin
- Enlarged spleen
- Red Palms
- Jaundice which is yellowing of the skin and eyes

Common Denominator in Fatty Liver Disease
A common denominator in fatty liver disease is a high calorie, unhealthy diet. Drinking alcohol can increase fat build up in the liver.

What Can Be Done
To reduce fat buildup in the liver and reduce your risks for liver damage;

- Eat a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats and balance of healthy proteins. Limit sugar and salt. Avoid nhealthy fats and processed foods.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

- Exercise. Begin with light to mild exercise most of the week. Start with small segments of cardio and strength exercises and build up to longer time as you increase your endurance and stamina.
- Be sure to talk to your physician before beginning any diet or exercise program.

Do you have risk factors of Fatty Liver Disease?
Share your comments below.

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