



**KANAKIA**  
Health Care

**Dr. Raju Kanakia**

MD, DNB (Gastroenterology)

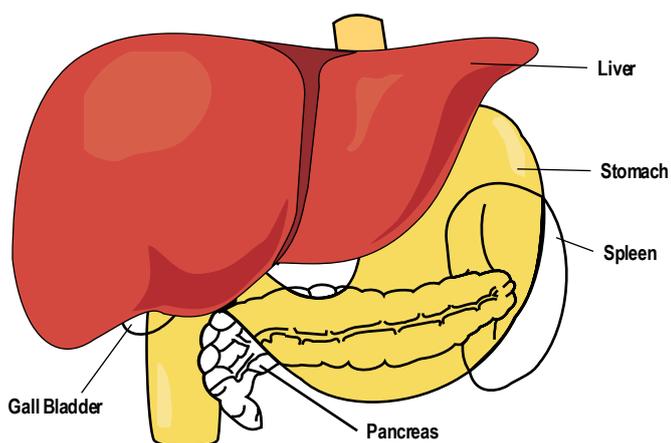
• Gastroenterologist • Hepatologist  
• Interventional G I Endoscopist

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# Alcoholic Liver Disease

## What is the liver?

The liver is the second largest organ of the body. It performs numerous tasks like storing vital energy and nutrients, manufacturing proteins and enzymes necessary for good health, protecting the body from disease, and also helps remove harmful toxins, like alcohol, from the body.



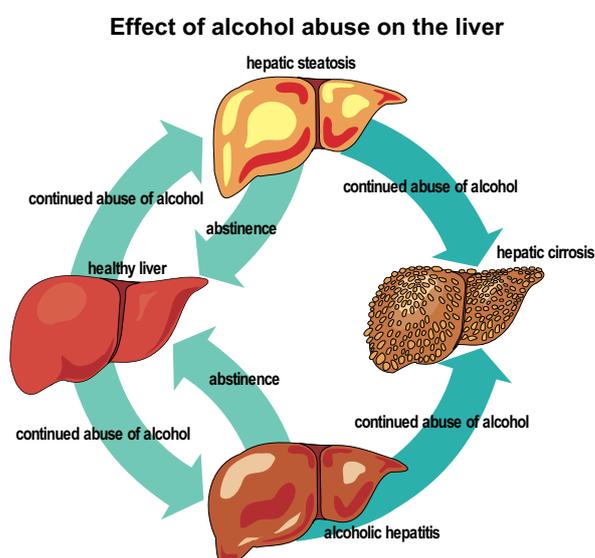
## What happens to alcohol once ingested?

Once swallowed, alcohol is absorbed in the bloodstream from the stomach and small intestine. From here it is first carried to the liver where enzymes metabolize the alcohol. If taken in excess than the liver can deal with, the additional alcohol will accumulate in the blood and body tissues resulting in high blood alcohol concentrations that last for several hours.

## What are the types of alcoholic liver disease?

There are three types of alcoholic liver disease.

- **Fatty liver** results with heavy drinking for as little as a few days. This is the earliest stage of alcoholic liver disease. It is marked by an excessive buildup of fat inside liver cells. This condition can be reversed, however, when drinking stops.
- **Alcoholic hepatitis** is an inflammation of the liver that occurs when drinking continues. Symptoms include nausea, lack of appetite, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain and tenderness, jaundice, and, sometimes, mental confusion. If drinking stops there MAY be complete recovery.
- **Cirrhosis** results if drinking continues. It is an inflammation of the liver in which healthy liver cells are replaced by scar tissue leaving the liver unable to perform its vital functions. Women are at higher risk than men for developing cirrhosis. Generally damage is permanent and cannot recover.



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## What are risk factors for alcoholic liver disease?

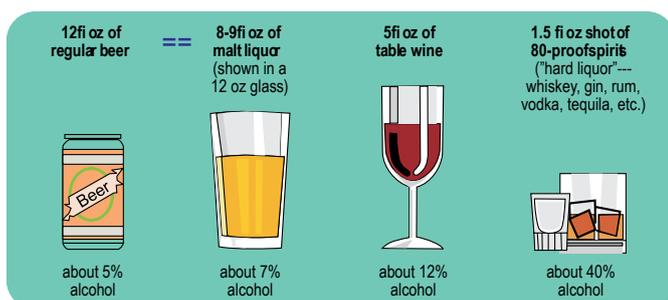
In general, the risk of liver disease increases with the quantity and duration of alcohol intake. However, not all heavy drinkers develop liver disease. A threshold daily alcohol intake of 40 g is necessary to produce alcoholic hepatitis. A daily intake of more than 60 g of alcohol in men and 20 g in women increases the risk of cirrhosis.

Other risk factors include:

- Age
- Female gender
- Type of alcohol
- Obesity
- Malnutrition
- Genetic predisposition
- Coexistent medical conditions
- Concomitant exposure to liver toxins

## What is a standard drink?

A standard drink is about 10 g of absolute alcohol. The amount of liquid in your glass, can, or bottle does not necessarily match up to how much alcohol is actually in your drink. Even though they come in different sizes, the drinks below are each examples of one standard drink:



## What are the complications of alcoholic liver disease?

Complications of alcoholic liver disease include:

- Accumulation of fluid in the abdomen (ascites)
- Bleeding from veins in the esophagus
- Enlarged spleen
- High blood pressure in the liver
- Changes in mental function, and coma
- Kidney failure
- Liver cancer

## How is alcoholic liver disease diagnosed?

- Complete blood count (CBC)
- Liver function tests
- Coagulation studies
- Ultrasound of abdomen
- Abdominal CT scan
- Liver biopsy

## How is alcoholic liver disease treated?

- Stop drinking alcohol completely
- Participation in an alcoholic recovery program
- Changes in diet and certain vitamin supplements may be started to help the liver recover from the alcohol-related damage
- Management of complications caused by liver damage
- Liver transplant may be an option in advanced cases of alcoholic cirrhosis
- Other treatment options such as

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- Medium chain fatty acids or MCT
- Antioxidant precursor e.g. S-adenosylmethionine (SAME), which can enter the cells and then break down to form helpful antioxidants.  
Pentoxifylline
- Corticosteroids

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