Fatty Liver Diet

Patient Education

What Is Fatty Liver Disease?

Fatty liver disease happens when too much fat builds up in your liver. Doctors now call it MASLD (say: "MAZ-uld"). That stands for Metabolic dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease. It used to be called NAFLD.

- It is linked to things like being overweight, having high blood sugar, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol.
- It is NOT caused by drinking too much alcohol (that is a different kind of liver disease).
- The good news: you can make it better with healthy eating and moving your body more!

If fatty liver gets worse, it can turn into:

- **MASH** (Metabolic dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis) — the fat causes swelling and damage in your liver
- **Cirrhosis** — very serious, late-stage liver damage

How Can I Help My Liver?

Eat Healthy Foods

- Stay away from sugary foods and drinks. Eat fewer starchy foods like white bread, white pasta, white rice, and potatoes.
- Eat less saturated fat and trans fat (found in fried food, packaged snacks, and fast food).
- Do not drink alcohol. Even small amounts can be harmful to a liver with fatty liver disease.
- Eat more fiber (fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains).
- Black coffee (up to 3 cups a day) may help your liver, as long as your doctor says it's okay. Skip the added sugar and cream.

Move Your Body

- Try to move for at least 150 minutes each week. That's about 30 minutes, 5 days a week.
- Good choices: fast walking, biking, swimming, or water aerobics — anything that gets your heart beating faster!
- Try to do strength exercises (like push-ups, squats, or lifting light weights) 2–3 times a week.

Lose Weight If Needed

- Losing weight is one of the most powerful things you can do for your liver.
- Losing at least 5% of your body weight starts to lower liver fat and swelling.
- Losing 10% or more is the amount most likely to actually improve liver scarring. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, 10% is 20 pounds.
- Every pound counts — the more you lose, the more your liver tends to improve.
- A safe speed is about 1–2 pounds per week.

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Take Care of Other Health Problems

- If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol, keeping those under control helps your liver too.
- Talk to your doctor about your medicines and whether any of them can also help your liver.

Healthy Eating Tips

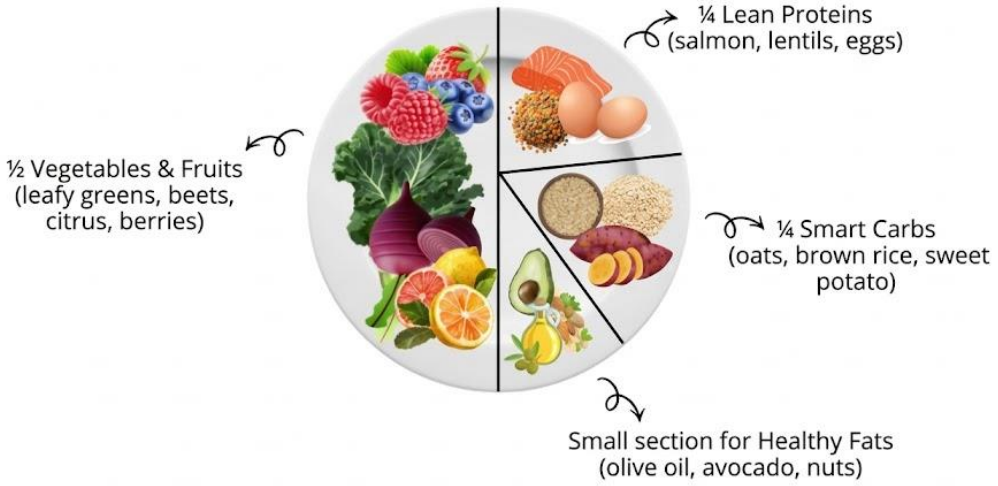
- **Eat on a schedule:** Have 3 meals and 1–2 snacks every day. Don't skip meals.
- **Watch how much you eat:** Stop eating when you feel full — not stuffed.
- **Eat slowly:** Take your time. Use smaller plates and bowls to help with portion sizes.

✅ Best Choices	🚫 Avoid or Limit
• Fresh fruits and vegetables • Whole grains (brown rice, oats, quinoa, whole wheat bread) • Lean proteins (chicken, fish, eggs, beans) • Healthy fats (olive oil, avocado, nuts) • Water, unsweetened tea, black coffee	• Fried food and fast foods • Ultra-processed foods (packaged snacks, frozen meals, chips) • Sugary snacks and drinks • White bread, white rice, and white pasta • Processed meats (bacon, sausage, hot dogs) • Too much salt (aim for <2,000 mg/day) • Alcohol

What Does a Healthy Plate Look Like?

Try to have a lean protein, a complex carbohydrate, and a non-starchy vegetable every time you eat.

- Fill ¼ of the plate with a lean protein
- Fill ¼ with a complex carbohydrate (whole grain, fruit, starchy vegetable)
- Fill ½ with a non-starchy vegetables (all <u>except</u> peas, corn, potato, and squash)
- Add a small amount of **healthy fat** (like olive oil or avocado)



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Protein: Why It Matters

Eating enough protein helps protect your muscles and can be part of a liver-healthy diet.

- Spread your protein out during the day — don't eat it all at one meal.
- Try plant-based proteins often (beans, lentils, tofu).

How Much Protein Do I Need?

- Most people with fatty liver need about 80–100 grams of protein each day, but your needs might be different depending on your body size, kidneys, and health.
- A dietitian can help figure out what's right for you.

What Does a Serving of Protein Look Like?

- 2–3 ounces cooked chicken, fish, or meat (about the size of a deck of cards) → 21 g
- 2 eggs → 12 g
- ½ cup cooked beans or lentils → 7–9 g
- ½ cup tofu or tempeh → 8–10 g
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt (low-fat) → 15 g
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter → 7 g
- Protein shake (depends on the brand) → 15–30 g

Choose Lean Proteins (look for 90% lean or higher)

✅ Best Choices	🚫 Avoid or Limit
• Chicken or turkey without skin • Fish and seafood • Lean beef or pork (trimmed of fat) • Eggs or egg whites • Beans, lentils, and other legumes • Tofu and tempeh • Nuts and nut butters • Plain yogurt or milk	• Fatty cuts of beef or pork • Chicken or turkey with skin • Deep-fried meat • Processed meats (bacon, sausage, hot dogs, bologna, salami)

A Note About Protein Powders and Shakes:

Protein powders or ready-to-drink shakes can help if you need extra protein. Talk to your doctor or dietitian before adding them. Examples: Fairlife Nutrition Plan, Fairlife Core Power, OWYN, Orgain, Ripple, Glucerna, Ensure Max, and IsoPure.

Carbohydrates: Pick the Right Ones

How Many Carbs Do I Need?

- Most people with fatty liver do well with about 5 servings of high-fiber carbs per day.
- If you have diabetes or need a low-carb diet, try about 2 servings (30 grams) at each meal and 0–1 serving (less than 15 grams) for snacks.
- A dietitian can help you figure out what's best.

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What Is One Serving of Carbs? (One serving = 15 grams)

- 1 slice bread; ¼ large bagel; 1 tortilla (6-inch); ½ hamburger or hotdog bun
- ½ cup cooked oatmeal or hot cereal; ⅓ cup cooked rice or pasta; ¾ cup dry cereal; 5–6 crackers
- ½ cup starchy vegetables (potato, peas, corn, squash); ½ cup beans (also a protein)
- 1 cup or 1 small piece of fruit; 2 tablespoon dried fruit; ½ cup fruit juice
- 1 cup milk or soy milk (also a protein); ½ cup plain yogurt (also a protein)

How to Pick Good Carbs:

- Look for foods with at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.
- Look for words like "whole grain," "whole wheat," "sprouted grain," or "high fiber" on the label.
- Pick foods with less than 8 grams of sugar per serving.

✅ Best Choices	🚫 Avoid or Limit
• Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit (in fruit juice, not syrup) • Fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables • Whole grains (brown rice, oats, quinoa, whole wheat bread) • Beans and lentils • Plain yogurt • Milk or soy milk	• White bread, white rice, white pasta • Candy, cookies, ice cream, pastries • Foods or drinks with high fructose corn syrup • Sweetened juice or canned fruit in syrup • French fries and fried potatoes • Sweetened yogurt

<u>Non-Starchy Vegetables: Eat as Many as You Want!</u>

Non-starchy vegetables are low in calories and full of fiber and good stuff your body needs.

- Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables at meals.
- They help your liver, help your digestion, and help you feel full.
- There is no limit — eat as many as you like!

Examples:

- **Leafy greens:** spinach, kale, lettuce, Swiss chard, arugula, collard greens
- **Crunchy veggies:** broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, bok choy
- **Other veggies:** zucchini, carrots, cucumber, bell peppers, green beans, asparagus, celery, mushrooms, onions, garlic, tomatoes, radishes, eggplant, okra, summer squash

Tips for Eating More Veggies:

- Fill half your plate with them at every meal.
- Eat them raw, steamed, roasted, or stir-fried with a little olive oil.
- Add them to salads, soups, omelets, pasta, or grain bowls.
- Mix up the colors! Different colors give you different nutrients.

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Fats: Choose the Healthy Kind

Fat is part of a healthy diet. Most people with fatty liver should get about 25–35% of their calories from fat, mostly from healthy sources.

Healthy Fat Servings (pick a few each day):

- 1 tablespoon olive oil, avocado oil, or sunflower oil
- 1 ounce (small handful) of nuts or seeds
- ½ avocado
- 1 ounce cheese
- 1 tablespoon nut butter

Fats to Limit or Avoid:

- **Saturated fats:** fatty meat, chicken skin, whole-fat dairy, butter, lard
- **Trans fats:** found in fried foods, cookies, cakes, and packaged snacks (look for "partially hydrogenated" on the label)

Dairy and Dairy Substitutes

Pick low-fat or fat-free options. Watch out for added sugar in yogurt and milk alternatives.

Good Choices:

- Low-fat milk (skim or 1%)
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Low-fat sour cream
- Plain Greek yogurt
- Cheese (in small amounts)
- Unsweetened almond, coconut, or soy milk

Salt (Sodium)

Try to eat less than 2,000 mg per day.

- Taste your food before adding salt — your taste buds will get used to less salt over time.
- Use herbs and salt-free seasonings instead.
- Eat fewer fast foods, snack foods, and processed foods. Check labels for sodium.
- Choose low-sodium or salt-free canned and packaged foods.
- Foods high in salt: processed meats (bacon, ham, sausage, deli meats), cheese, sauces, canned and boxed foods.

Sugar

Eating too much sugar can make your liver store extra fat.

Added Sugar:

- Try to eat less than 25 grams per day (that's about 6 teaspoons).
- Stay away from sugary drinks (soda, sweet tea, energy drinks, fruit juice).
- Eat fewer sweets, candy, desserts, and processed foods with added sugar.

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Natural Sugar:

- Whole Fruit is okay because it has fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Whole fruit is better than fruit juice or sweetened fruit products.

Easy Tips:

- Read food labels to check how much sugar is in your food.
- Drink water, unsweetened coffee or tea, or sparkling water instead of sugary drinks.
- Try fruit or yogurt instead of dessert.

Sample Meal Ideas (Each meal provides 20+ grams protein and 30 grams or fewer carbs)

Breakfast / Brunch

- **Omelet Toast:** 2 eggs, ¼ cup cheddar cheese, ½ cup bell peppers, 1 slice toast, ½ small banana
- **Breakfast Burrito:** 2 eggs, ½ cup black beans, ½ cup roasted veggies, ¼ avocado, 2 tbsp salsa, 1 low-carb tortilla
- **Avocado Egg Toast:** 2 eggs, 1 slice toast, ¼ avocado, ½ cup berries
- **Yogurt Parfait:** 1 cup Greek yogurt, 1 tbsp chia seeds, ½ cup raspberries, ¼ cup high-fiber cereal
- **Protein Smoothie:** 1 scoop whey protein, ½ banana, 1 cup 2% milk, 1 tbsp peanut butter
- **Waffle Cottage Cheese:** 1 whole-grain waffle, ¾ cup cottage cheese, ½ cup berries, 1 tsp almond butter
- **Oatmeal (vegan):** ½ cup rolled oats, ½ cup berries, 2 tbsp walnuts, ½ cup milk of choice
- **Tofu Scramble (vegan):** ½ block firm tofu, ½ cup sautéed spinach, peppers, mushrooms, 1 slice toast, 1 tsp nutritional yeast

Lunch / Dinner

- **Turkey Sandwich or Wrap**: 2–4 oz lean turkey, 2 slices whole-grain bread or 1 wrap, 1 slice cheese, lettuce, tomato, mustard
- **Pork Chop Meal**: 4 oz pork, small baked potato, 1 cup green beans
- **Southwest Chicken Salad**: 4 oz chicken, ¼ cup black beans, ¼ cup corn, ¼ avocado, salsa
- **Egg Salad**: 3 eggs, 1 tbsp mayo or yogurt, 2 slices whole wheat bread, lettuce
- **Salmon Spinach Salad**: 4 oz salmon, 2 cups greens, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, 1 tbsp vinaigrette, 1 small wheat roll, ½ cup melon
- **Shrimp Meal**: 4 oz shrimp, ½ cup cooked quinoa, ¾ cup sautéed veggies
- **Cheeseburger Meal**: 4 oz lean beef or turkey patty, 1 slice cheese, whole grain bun, lettuce, tomato, red onion, ¼ avocado, 1 cup steamed vegetables, 1 tsp mustard
- **Cottage Cheese Plate**: 1 cup cottage cheese, 1 cup raw veggies, 7 crackers, 1 small apple
- **Farro Grain Bowl (vegan)**: ½ cup cooked farro, ½ cup chickpeas, 1 cup steamed broccoli carrots, 1 tsp tahini, pumpkin seeds, lemon-tahini dressing
- **Tofu Stir-Fry (vegan)**: 3–4 oz firm tofu, 1 cup mixed vegetables, ½ cup cooked brown rice, 1 tsp sesame oil, soy sauce

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Easy Ways to Cook Vegetables

Roast:

- Set oven to 400–425°F. Use 1 tablespoon oil for 1 pound of veggies. Spread them out so they're not crowded. Cook 15–20 minutes.
- Great for: Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, asparagus, sweet potato, carrots

Sauté (cook on the stove):

- Cut veggies into small pieces. Use just enough oil to coat the pan. Cook until slightly browned.
- Great for: green beans, mushrooms, snap peas, broccoli, asparagus, bell peppers, spinach

Grill:

- Use medium to high heat. Cut veggies to the same size. Lightly coat with oil and seasoning. Grill 3–5 minutes per side.
- Great for: onions, tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, bell peppers

Season with:

- Salt-free seasonings (like Mrs. Dash); Fresh herbs; Extra virgin olive oil; Fresh ground black pepper; Chimichurri (a mix of fresh herbs, garlic, vinegar, and olive oil); Pesto; Balsamic vinegar

Resources

Books:

- Skinny Liver by Kristin Kirkpatrick, MS RD and Ibrahim Hanouneh, MD
- Regenerative Health by Kristin Kirkpatrick, MS RD and Ibrahim Hanouneh, MD

Cookbooks:

- The Complete Mediterranean Cookbook by America's Test Kitchen
- The Good Carb Cookbook by Sandra Woodruff MS, RD
- The Insulin Resistance Diet Plan Cookbook by Tara Spencer
- Mediterranean Meal Prep Cookbook by Kay Tuthill
- The 30-Minute Mediterranean Diet Cookbook by Serena Ball MS RDN, and Deanna Segrave-Daly RDN
- Mediterranean Diet Cookbook for Dummies by Meri Raffetto RDN, and Wendy Jo Peterson MS RDN
- The Real Food Table Cookbook by Jessica Beacom and Stacie Hassing
- The Healthy Meal Prep Cookbook by Toby Amidor, MS RD CSN
- Plant-Powered for Life by Sharon Palmer RDN

Food Tracking Apps:

- MyFitnessPal: myfitnesspal.com
- Cronometer: cronometer.com

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- MyMacros: getmymacros.com
- FitDay: fitday.com

If you have any additional questions, please contact our office.

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