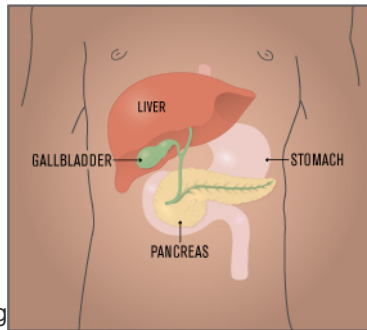


Alcohol and Liver Disease

admin · Monday, February 4th, 2008

The liver can process alcohol fairly safely when in moderation. However, heavy drinking can cause serious complications resulting in liver damage. Alcohol reaches your stomach and begins to break down the consumed alcohol. The alcohol is then absorbed in the upper portion of the small intestine. From there, it travels in your blood to the digestive tract which will affect nearly every liver cell. When alcohol is present, the liver cells are forced to first metabolize the alcohol, allowing fatty acids to accumulate, sometimes in large



amounts. A liver clogged with fat causes liver cells to become less efficient at performing their necessary tasks, resulting in impairment of a person's nutritional health. Fatty liver is the first stage of liver deterioration in heavy drinkers, and interferes with the distribution of oxygen and nutrients to the liver's cells. If the condition persists long enough, the liver cells will die, forming fibrous scar tissue.

Some liver cells can regenerate with good nutrition and abstinence, however in the last stage of deterioration, or cirrhosis, the damage to the liver cells is the least reversible. In fact, one of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States is liver disease caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

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