

Nutrition for Liver Disease

Patients with liver disease need to eat a balanced diet that provides enough calories and protein.

Tips for Increasing Calories and Protein

Patients may have a poor appetite or may get full quickly at mealtimes. This can make it hard to get the nutrition you need. If you have these problems, try to:

- Eat small frequent meals or snacks every 2-3 hours and always have a bedtime snack with protein.
- Use nutritional supplement drinks like Boost[®], Ensure[®], or Carnation Breakfast Essentials[®] between meals.
- Focus on eating foods highest in calories and protein first at meals.
- Eat at least 20 grams of protein at all meals and snacks.

Protein

To make sure you are eating enough protein, include a protein rich food at each meal and snack. You need _____ grams of protein per day.

Sources of protein include:

Meat and Meat Substitutes:

- Meat—lean pork, lean beef, fish, poultry (7 grams per 1 ounce)
- Beans— black beans, chickpeas— hummus, kidney beans, refried beans, pinto beans (7-9 grams per ½ cup cooked)
- Lentils (9 grams per ½ cup cooked)
- Tofu (13 grams per 3 ounces)
- Boca Burger (14 grams per burger)

Eggs and Dairy:

- Eggs (6 grams per egg—the whites contain the protein)
- Milk (8 grams per 1 cup—choose whole milk for higher calories if needed)
- Soy milk (8 grams per 1 cup)
- Greek yogurt – Oikos Triple Zero, Chobani, etc. (15 grams per 6 ounce)
- Cottage cheese (13 grams per ½ cup)
- Soft cheeses—mozzarella, brie, camembert (6 grams per ounce)
- Medium cheeses—cheddar, Swiss (7 or 8 grams per ounce)
- Hard cheeses—parmesan (10 grams per ounce)

Nuts, Seeds, Grains:

- Nut butters- almond and peanut butter (8 grams per 2 Tablespoons)
- Almonds (8 grams per ¼ cup)
- Peanuts (9 grams per ¼ cup)
- Cashews (5 grams per ¼ cup)
- Sunflower seeds (6 grams for ¼ cup)
- Pumpkin seeds (8 grams per ¼ cup)
- Flax seeds (9 grams per ¼ cup)
- Quinoa (8 grams per 1 cup)
- Kashi[®] bar (8 grams per bar)

Nutrition Supplements:

- Premier Protein (160 calories, 30 g protein)
- Boost Original (240 calories, 10 g protein)
- Boost Plus (360 calories, 14 g protein)
- Boost Glucose Control Max Protein (160 kcal, 30 g protein)
- Boost Very High Calorie (530 calories, 22 g protein)
- Ensure Plus (350 calories, 16 g protein)

- One Bars (220 calories, 20 g protein)
- Liquacel (100 calories, 16 g protein)

Sodium

If you have ascites (fluid that collects in your abdomen) or retain fluid in your legs or arms, lower the amount of sodium in your diet. This can help to control the fluid. Eat less than 2000 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day.

What foods are high in sodium?

- Packaged and processed foods such as canned soups, lunch and processed meats, frozen dinners, and restaurant/fast food.

Tips to lower sodium intake:

- Do not add salt to your foods before eating. Use half the amount of salt in cooking.
- Instead of using salt, use seasoning with no salt such as Mrs. Dash, garlic powder or onion powder. Fresh or dried herbs can also be used to add flavor.
- Choose low sodium versions of canned or boxed foods.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit.
- Read nutrition labels for sodium <140 mg per serving (see example below)
- Choose fresh or low sodium meat options rather than cured or processed lunch meats, hot dogs/brats, ham, etc
- Cook at home using fresh ingredients rather than eating fast foods and restaurant food

- Do not use salt substitutes made with a potassium salt if you:
 - Take a medicine that raises your potassium level, like Spironolactone.
 - Have a history of high potassium levels.
- Do not use seasonings or condiments with salt like garlic salt, lemon pepper, horseradish, meat sauces, seasoning salt, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and BBQ sauce.

Reading Nutrition Labels:

- Consider the serving size and sodium content in milligrams to assess sodium content. Eating more than what is listed as 1 serving means eating more sodium. In the example below, one serving is 1 cup which gives 470 mg sodium. The package has 2 servings. If you eat the whole package, you will eat 940 mg sodium (470 mg + 470 mg).
- Look for “low sodium” label or foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving

Sample label for
Macaroni & Cheese

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright 4/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#310