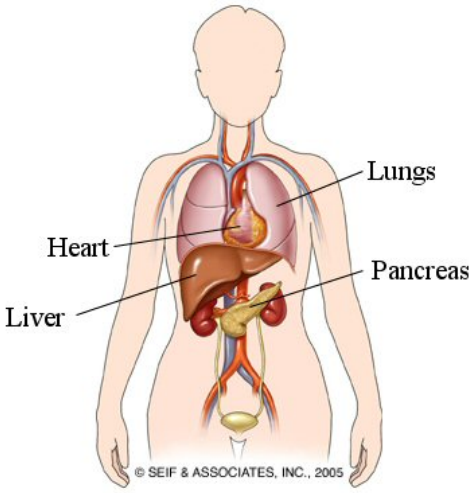
Alcoholic Hepatitis

Alcoholic hepatitis is a condition of the liver characterized by direct injury to the liver cells from alcohol abuse. This disease can occur after years of excessive drinking, or it may occur after isolated episodes of heavy alcohol consumption, such as binge drinking. The symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Abdominal pain.
- Fever.
- *Jaundice* (yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes).
- Dark urine.
- Swelling of the liver (fullness in your right upper abdomen).



Vomiting blood, fainting, memory loss, blackouts and hallucinations can develop as the disease progresses. This becomes worse with longer abuse. The more you drink, the greater the risk for severe alcoholic hepatitis. You do not have to drink to the point of being "drunk" to cause liver damage. Permanent liver damage with cirrhosis, liver failure and death can develop if you continue to drink.

A poor diet is a big part of the problem. Heavy drinkers do not eat a balanced diet. Essential foods and vitamins may be missing from the diet. This leads to malnutrition, which damages the liver further, and can damage the brain, nerves, stomach and other organ systems. **Treating alcoholic hepatitis means that you need to stop drinking and start eating a well-balanced diet including appropriate calories, proteins, vitamins and certain fats.** You should also take vitamin supplements, especially vitamin B1 (thiamine) and folic acid. You must stay away from alcohol to recover. Many of the effects of acute alcoholic hepatitis are reversible, if you avoid further alcohol use. Avoid other drugs that are toxic to the liver; your caregiver can tell you which drugs these are. **Joining a recovery group such as AA or seeking a rehabilitation clinic or group can help give you the support you need to make this change possible.**

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have increasing abdominal pain.
- You have persistent vomiting or are unable to tolerate oral nutrition.
- You have blood in your vomit.
- You have confusion, *lethargy* (a lack of energy) or any change in your normal mental abilities.
- You develop jaundice.

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