Primary Biliary Cirrhosis

Primary biliary cirrhosis is a liver disease that slowly destroys the bile ducts in the liver. Bile, a substance that helps digest fat, leaves the liver through these ducts. When the ducts are damaged, bile builds up in the liver and damages liver tissue. Over time, the disease can cause cirrhosis and may make the liver stop working.

CAUSES

The cause of primary biliary cirrhosis is unknown. The disease affects women more often than men, and usually occurs between the ages of 30 and 60 years. Some research suggests that the disease might be caused by a problem within the immune system.

SYMPTOMS

The most common symptoms of primary biliary cirrhosis are:

- Itchy skin.
- Fatigue.
- Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin).
- Cholesterol deposits on the skin.
- Fluid retention.
- Dry eyes or mouth.
- Osteoporosis & arthritis.
- Thyroid problems.

DIAGNOSIS

Primary biliary cirrhosis is diagnosed through laboratory tests, x rays, and in some cases, a liver *biopsy* (a simple operation to remove a small piece of liver tissue).

TREATMENT

Treatment may include:

- Hormone therapy.
- Ursodiol is beneficial for patients with primary.
- A liver transplant may be necessary if the liver is severely damaged.
- Taking vitamin and calcium supplements.
- Medicines to relieve symptoms.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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