

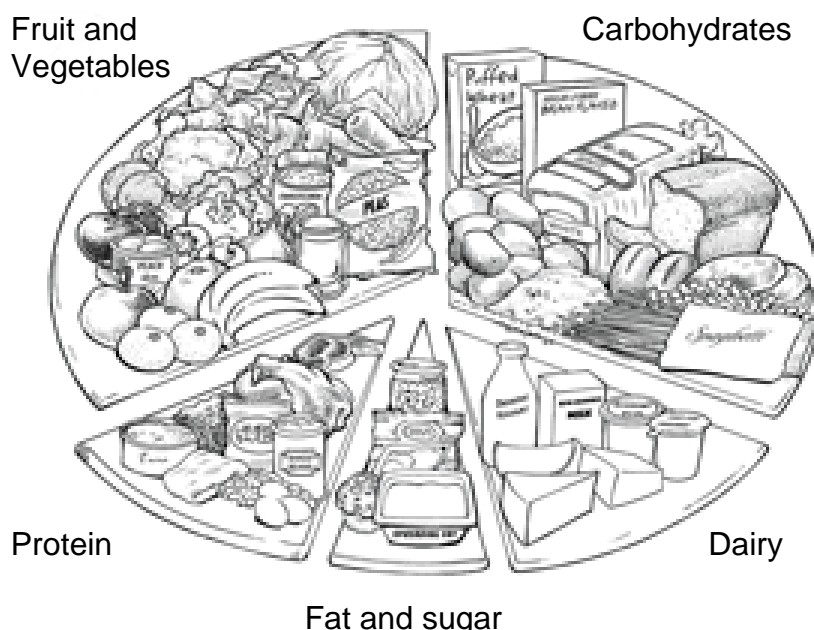
What sort of diet should I try to eat?

People with cirrhosis require **more energy and protein** in their diet than someone who has a healthy liver. Aim for 25 – 35 kcal (calories) and 1.2 - 1.3g of protein for every kg of your body weight per day. For a 70kg adult this is around 2000 calories a day and 85g of protein a day. If you are underweight you will require more energy and protein.

When you have liver cirrhosis your body is unable to digest and absorb carbohydrate effectively. Energy from the food you eat only lasts two hours so your body will find an alternative energy source. Usually protein stores (muscles) are used first for energy. If this continues you may notice weakening and wasting of your muscles leading to reduced strength.

Key tips

- Have four to six **snack meals** rather than one or two bigger meals, so that your energy and protein intake is spread through the day
- Have a **late evening snack, containing 50g of carbohydrate** (see next page for examples)
- **Eat starchy (carbohydrate) foods** which help to provide energy more slowly over a longer period. Try to include these at every meal and with regular snacks. Examples of starchy carbohydrate foods are: rice, pasta, potatoes, bread, breakfast cereals, noodles, chapatti, naan, plain biscuits, cakes/muffins, crackers, toast, small sandwich, tea cake, malt loaf, scone, yogurt, milk
- Eat poultry, fish, eggs, beans and pulses, milk, yoghurts and cheese as a good source of protein, as a healthy alternative to red meat. Try to eat these 3-4 times a day



It is important to have a balanced diet: including fruit and vegetables, protein such as meat, fish, eggs and beans, carbohydrates such as bread, rice, potato and pasta, milk and dairy, and smaller amounts of high fat or sugar foods.

If you have developed problems with jaundice (yellow discolouration of the skin and eyes), fluid retention (ascites or oedema) and confusion (encephalopathy), these are all signs that the liver is no longer working well enough to perform its functions. This requires expert dietary advice as you may require an even more high energy, high protein diet (35 – 40 kcal and 1.5g of protein for every kg of your body weight per day).

You may need **nutritional supplement drinks** if you are unable to eat enough. You may also need some specific dietary measures, such as **vitamins and minerals**, including calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones.

Salt and fluid retention (oedema and ascites)

If you have fluid build-up in your legs (oedema) or abdomen (ascites), reducing the amount of **salt** in your diet can help control this.

Aim for no more than 5.2g of salt (Sodium Chloride) per day

- **Do not add salt to food.** Black pepper, lemon, ginger, garlic, onions and herbs can be used as an alternative.
- Avoid canned and processed foods, ready meals, sauces and cured meats or choose lower salt options if this is not possible. **Use the table below to help you read food labels and choose low salt food.**

	Low / 100g	Medium / 100g	High / 100g
Salt	0g - 0.3g	0.3g - 1.5g	More than 1.5g
Sodium	0g - 0.1g	0.1g - 0.6g	More than 0.6g

Bed time snacks

To keep your body fuelled overnight, reduce weight loss, muscle wasting and fatigue **it is important to have a 50g carbohydrate snack.** Each snack below contains approximately 50g carbohydrate:

- 2 slices of toast or 2 crumpets with butter and honey/jam
- 1 toasted teacake with butter and ½ pint semi skimmed milk
- 8 cream crackers with butter and jam
- 1 large pita bread with hummus
- 40g cereal with 100ml milk and 200ml of fruit juice or chopped banana
- Porridge made with milk and topped with honey/jam
- 3 digestive biscuits and mug of hot chocolate made with milk
- Medium sized banana, 125g pot of fruit yogurt and 250mls semi skimmed milk
- Ensure plus milkshake / Fortisip with 1-2 plain biscuits
- Ensure plus Juice / Fortijuice.

Note: if you are diabetic please discuss these changes with your diabetes nurse, GP or dietitian as it may result in an increase in blood glucose levels.

Further information

Information is available from the British Liver Trust <http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/>