

Fatty Liver Disease Threatens People With HIV

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease can lead to more severe, potentially fatal liver diseases, including cirrhosis.

February 6, 2019 By [Benjamin Ryan](#)

People with HIV have high rates of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), a major health risk that may only rise as the population ages, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in *Infectious Disease Therapies*, researchers conducted a review of evidence regarding fatty liver disease among HIV-positive individuals.

NAFLD is a condition in which fat accumulates in the liver of people who drink low amounts of alcohol. About 1 in 10 people with fatty liver disease will progress to non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), and about one in three of those individuals will develop fibrosis (scarring) or cirrhosis of the liver.

A previous systematic review and meta-analysis found that 35 percent of people with HIV have NAFLD compared with 25 percent of the general population. Among those HIV-positive people who persistently have elevated liver enzymes, 57 to 72 percent of study cohorts had fatty liver disease.

Traditional risk factors for fatty liver disease include a high body mass index (BMI) and high waist circumference, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high triglycerides. As people with HIV age, these risk factors may become more instrumental than HIV-related factors as drivers of NAFLD risk.

The new paper found that the following virus-related factors may contribute to NAFLD and NASH among people with HIV:

- Insulin resistance that derives from HIV or from the use of older protease inhibitors and nucleoside/nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs), in particular Zerit (stavudine, or d4T).
- Damage to the mitochondria in cells caused by older NRTIs, in particular Zerit and Retrovir

(zidovudine, or AZT).

- Higher blood lipid levels driven by boosted protease inhibitors—meaning those protease inhibitors paired with Norvir (ritonavir) or Tybost (cobicistat).

To read the aidsmap article, [click here](#).

To read the study abstract, [click here](#).

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