Starting HIV Treatment May Improve Liver Health

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Beginning antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for HIV may provide a boost to liver health among those with and without hepatitis B or C viruses (HBV/HCV). To reach this conclusion, researchers studied 494 HIV-positive men, including 24 coinfected with HCV, 27 coinfected with HBV and 2 coinfected with HBV and HCV.

The participants underwent liver function screening during the years leading up to and following their initiation of HIV treatment.

“Untreated HIV infection has been linked to liver damage, even in the absence of known liver disease such as viral hepatitis,” says Jennifer Price, MD, PhD, a gastroenterologist at the University of California, San Francisco and the study’s lead author. “We found that effective HIV treatment helps counteract this liver damage, at least in the short term after starting antiretroviral therapy. Our findings show that the benefits of HIV treatment extend beyond preventing AIDS-related illness and that effective HIV treatment has protective effects on the liver.”

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