

Metabolic associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD)



What is metabolic associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD)?

Often just called 'fatty liver', and previously known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), metabolic associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD) is a chronic liver disease associated with an excess amount of fat within the liver. It is the most common liver disease worldwide affecting about 1 in 4 adults. Many individuals are unaware that they have this condition. MAFLD is associated with overweight (particularly around the waistline), type 2 diabetes and high blood fats, blood pressure and high blood sugar levels. MAFLD can lead to more severe liver disease such as liver cirrhosis (advanced liver scarring) and liver cancer.

How does exercise help with MAFLD?

Exercise has direct benefits on fatty liver including:

- Reducing liver fat
- Improving blood sugar control
- Improving blood pressure
- Improving blood fats like cholesterol and triglycerides

Exercise has other benefits for people with fatty liver including:

- Assisting with weight loss and weight management
- Improving cardiorespiratory fitness
- Improving body composition by reducing fat and/or increasing muscle mass
- Improving muscle strength and endurance
- Improving mental health
- Improving quality of life

Regular exercise can play a role in preventing the development of other conditions linked with MAFLD such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease, as well as reducing liver damage associated with the progression of fatty liver.

What type of exercise is best for MAFLD?

- It is important to choose exercises that you enjoy so that you will stick to your exercise plan in the long-term.
- Aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming, jogging, dancing and team sports) is particularly beneficial for the management of fatty liver and also improves the health of your heart, blood vessels and your aerobic fitness.
- Resistance training are exercises that increase your strength (such as body weight exercises, resistance band exercises, circuit training and weightlifting). Resistance exercise can also help to promote healthy muscles and bones.
- You should aim to achieve 150-300 minutes per week of aerobic exercise at a 'moderate' to 'vigorous' exercise intensity. Including two to three non-consecutive days per week of resistance training in addition to your aerobic exercise may provide additional health benefits.
- It is important to select activities that are within your physical capabilities to prevent the risk of injury and to work with an accredited exercise professional if you have any musculoskeletal or other health concerns.