EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 18th November 2026: New liver disease guidelines call for earlier assessment of millions at risk, including everyone with type 2 diabetes 18th November 2026 - New national guidelines published today are calling for a major overhaul in how liver disease is identified in the UK, with experts recommending earlier testing for people at increased risk, including, for the first time, everyone diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Health ::

Related Keywords:

Liver Disease :: Liver Health :: Diabetes ::

Scan Me:

Wednesday 18 November, 2026

*****EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 18th November 2026*****

New liver disease guidelines call for earlier assessment of millions at risk, including everyone with type 2 diabetes

18th November 2026 - New national guidelines published today are calling for a major overhaul in how liver disease is identified in the UK, with experts recommending earlier testing for people at increased risk, including, for the first time, everyone diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

The new British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines, which are published today in the journal *Gut,* set out a clear pathway for finding liver disease earlier, when treatment and lifestyle changes can prevent serious complications and, in many cases, halt or even reverse damage to the liver.

Liver disease is often described as a "silent" condition because many people experience no symptoms until significant scarring has already developed. As a result, thousands of people are diagnosed only when they have advanced liver disease, cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Among the most significant changes is a recommendation that all people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes should be assessed for advanced liver disease. People with type 2 diabetes are known to be at substantially higher risk of liver disease, but many are currently unaware of the danger and may never be offered assessment. The guidelines recommend testing at diagnosis and repeat assessment every five years where no advanced disease is found.

The guidance also recommends proactive testing for people drinking harmful amounts of alcohol, stronger follow-up of abnormal liver blood tests, assessment when liver disease is identified incidentally on scans, and greater use of simple non-invasive tests that can identify liver scarring before symptoms develop.

Professor Stuart McPherson, Consultant Hepatologist and lead author of the guideline, said:

"Most serious liver disease develops over many years. The challenge is that patients often feel perfectly well until significant scarring has occurred.

"These guidelines bring together the latest evidence and provide a practical framework to help healthcare professionals identify people at highest risk and ensure they receive the right investigations and specialist care when needed."

Vanessa Hebditch, Director of Communications and Policy at Liver UK, and a member of the guideline development group, said: "These guidelines mark a major step forward in the early detection of liver disease. For too long, liver disease has often been diagnosed when it is already advanced and much harder to treat. Yet the reality is that liver disease can develop silently over many years, often without causing any symptoms.

"The new recommendations recognise that we need to be much better at identifying people at risk and offering them simple tests before irreversible damage occurs. That includes people with type 2 diabetes, people drinking at harmful levels, those with abnormal liver blood tests and others with known risk factors.

"Early detection is particularly important for liver disease because it can do much more than improve outcomes. In many cases, finding liver disease early gives people the opportunity to prevent progression and even reverse damage through treatment, support and lifestyle changes. That is why these recommendations have the potential to transform lives."

The guidelines recommend a two-step approach using simple blood tests and non-invasive fibrosis tests to assess whether liver scarring is present. This includes the FIB-4 blood test score and, where required, further tests such as the ELF blood test or a non-invasive liver scan called transient elastography.

Sara's father, Stephen, had lived with type 2 diabetes since 2000. In 2014, blood tests revealed abnormal liver function tests, and, during his annual diabetes reviews, he was told he had an abnormal liver but not to worry about it. He was not referred for further assessment and, according to his medical records, had just one liver scan in 2016. In 2024, he was diagnosed with MASLD and cirrhosis and tragically died within four months, aged 62.

Sara said: "People living with type 2 diabetes should know that they can also be at risk of liver disease. My dad had abnormal liver tests, but his liver wasn't monitored closely enough, and by the time he was diagnosed with MASLD and cirrhosis, it was too late. I hope these new guidelines mean that people with diabetes are identified earlier and given the monitoring and support they need."

Michelle had been overweight for many years before being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and subsequently with liver cirrhosis on her 58th birthday. She says she was unaware that being overweight could lead to liver disease and that, after her diabetes diagnosis, no one spoke to her about her risk of liver disease. As Michelle recalls: "It was only in 2021 when I was having some routine blood tests for my diabetes that my liver enzymes showed signs of concern." Further tests, including an ultrasound and FibroScan, revealed that she had cirrhosis, despite having no symptoms of liver damage.

One of the biggest challenges is that awareness of liver disease remains relatively low among primary care professionals. Nurses on our Liver UK helpline regularly hear from patients who have been told not to worry about abnormal liver blood tests, when in reality they can be an early warning sign of serious liver disease. Left undetected, liver disease can progress to cirrhosis, liver cancer or even the need for a liver transplant. As a result, the charity has also developed a practical, easy-to-follow guide for GPs based on the new recommendations to help support earlier identification and referral of people at risk of liver disease. These resources are available here: Diagnosis primary care guide - Liver UK

Liver UK has also produced new online information for the general public explaining who should be tested for liver disease, what tests patients can expect and when specialist referral may be needed. Available here: Getting tested for liver disease new - Liver UK

Research shows that most liver disease deaths are preventable through earlier diagnosis and intervention. Experts hope the new recommendations will help ensure more people are diagnosed before they develop advanced liver disease and its complications.

Company Contact:

Liver UK

T. 07494 032521
E. media@liveruk.org
W. www.liveruk.org

View Online

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.liver-uk.pressat.co.uk