

# THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIVER AT SEA

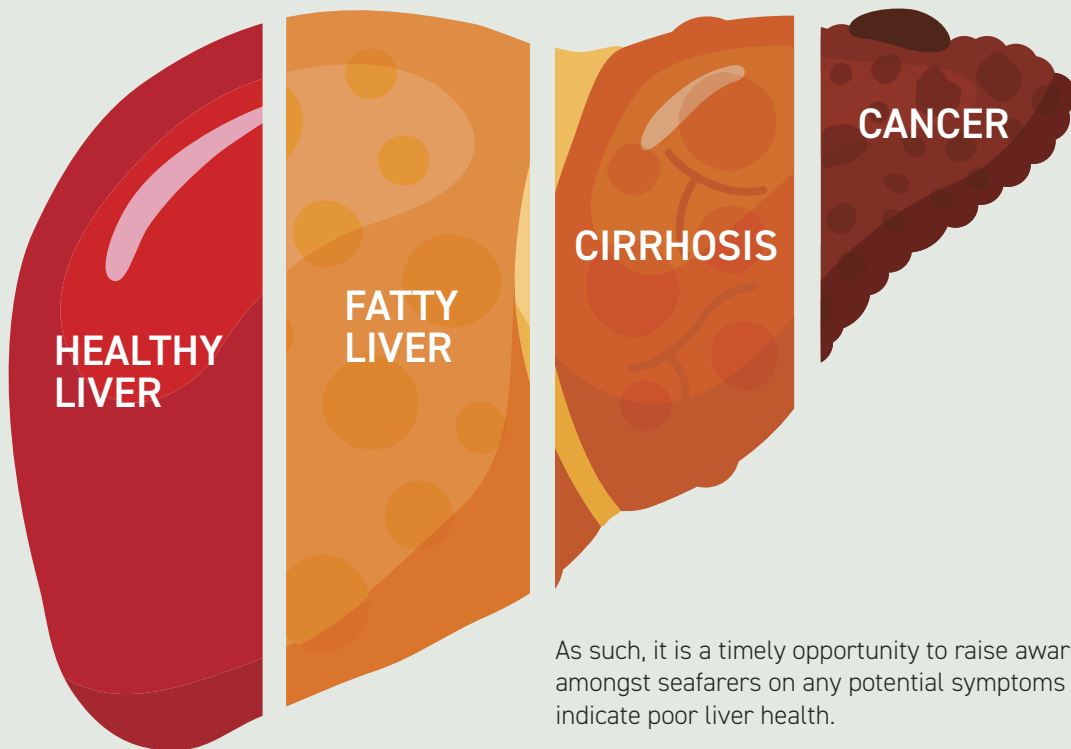
**THE LIVER PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE WITHIN OUR BODIES AND SHOULD BE CAREFULLY LOOKED AFTER FOR IT TO PERFORM ITS MANY IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS. THIS ARTICLE DETAILS WHAT SEAFARERS NEED TO KNOW TO HELP PROTECT THEIR LIVER FROM DISEASE.**

## WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE LIVER?

The liver is the largest solid organ in the body. This remarkable part of the body plays a number of vital roles such as: metabolising drugs and removing toxins, transforming food into energy, storing vitamins, fats, sugars, minerals and producing bile.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON TYPES OF LIVER DISEASES?

The majority of liver diseases are caused by alcohol use, obesity and viral hepatitis and are therefore preventable. A recent report by Public Health England highlighted that liver diseases increased by almost 21% in 2020 due to alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic.



As such, it is a timely opportunity to raise awareness amongst seafarers on any potential symptoms that could indicate poor liver health.

**THE LIVER CAN BE AFFECTED BY VARIOUS DISEASES, INCLUDING:**

**HEPATITIS** Inflammation of the liver caused by viruses (hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E) or other factors (see poster on page 5)

**CIRRHOSIS** Scarring of the liver that occurs due to long-term damage, such as alcohol abuse or chronic hepatitis

**FATTY LIVER DISEASE** Heavy alcohol consumption can cause an accumulation of fat in the liver. However there is an increasing prevalence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) which is caused by factors such as obesity and diabetes

**LIVER CANCER** Malignant growths that originate in the liver or spread from other parts of the body.

# HOW CAN LIVER DISEASES BE PREVENTED?

Prevention is key to maintaining a healthy liver and seafarers can take the following steps to prevent liver diseases:



**VACCINATION** Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B to protect yourself from these viral infections



**PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE** Wash hands frequently, especially before eating or handling food and avoid consuming contaminated water or food



**AVOID EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION** Limit alcohol intake (World Health Organization guidelines recommend no more than 14 units per week). Any alcohol consumption should also comply with the company's alcohol policy, which would have been formulated with industry and medical guidance



**EAT HEALTHILY** Including a range of fruit, vegetables, legumes (e.g. lentils and beans), nuts and whole grains



**REGULAR EXERCISE** Aim for between 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity and two muscle-strengthening activities per week, using the on board gymnasium



**SAFE SEX PRACTICES** Use barrier methods, such as condoms, to prevent the transmission of hepatitis B and other sexually transmitted infections



**PRACTICE SAFE NEEDLE HANDLING** Avoid sharing needles or other equipment for injections, as this can increase the risk of contracting hepatitis C or other bloodborne infections.

# WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF LIVER DISEASES?

Liver diseases often present similar symptoms, including:

- **FATIGUE AND WEAKNESS**
- **JAUNDICE** (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- **ABDOMINAL PAIN AND SWELLING**
- **NAUSEA AND VOMITING**
- **LOSS OF APPETITE AND WEIGHT LOSS**
- **DARK URINE AND PALE STOOLS**
- **ITCHY SKIN**
- **EASY BRUISING AND BLEEDING.**

If you experience any symptoms associated with liver diseases, it is important to take action promptly – always consult a healthcare professional who can evaluate your symptoms, perform diagnostic tests and provide appropriate treatment.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR LIVER: SEAFARERS AND LIFE ON SHIPS

To protect your liver from diseases, be sure to take care of your overall health by following the prevention methods mentioned. Vessel operators should also consider investing in crew fitness as a way of promoting health on the vessel and seafarers should get any necessary vaccinations in their home countries.

Liver disease can be a potential risk for all of us, but by understanding how to protect your liver and keep it healthy, knowing the common symptoms of liver disease and seeking medical care early, you can take proactive steps to safeguard the health of your liver.



This advice was compiled in collaboration with Future Care & International SOS, who implement health and security solutions to tens of thousands of global clients. They provide commercial vessels with high quality medical advice and assistance wherever they are in the world, 24/7/365, improving the overall health and wellness of the seafarers onboard.

# VIRAL HEPATITIS IS AN INFLAMMATION OF THE LIVER

The poster below produced by International SOS highlights the key facts. It can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/cwhepatitis>

## VIRAL HEPATITIS FACTS

Hepatitis is an **inflammation** of the **liver**



A person dies every **30 seconds** due to causes related to hepatitis.\*






Hepatitis is present **worldwide**\*

There are **5 main viruses** that can cause hepatitis:



### HOW IS HEPATITIS SPREAD?

 <p><b>Faecal-oral route</b> Contaminated food and water Raw or undercooked food Contaminated objects</p>	 <p><b>Blood-borne route</b> Exposure to infected body fluids - blood or semen Through sharing needles and syringes From an infected mother to her unborn child</p>	 <p><b>Person-to-person contact</b> Sexual contact with infected person From patient to parent or caregiver</p>
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**Common symptoms of hepatitis**



- > Fever
- > Fatigue
- > Loss of appetite
- > Nausea/vomiting
- > Abdominal discomfort/pain
- > Jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes); dark urine

**Visit your doctor and get tested!**




Many people do not show symptoms of hepatitis, yet can spread the illness.

### PREVENT HEPATITIS!


 <p>Wash your hands with safe water and soap</p>	 <p>Choose safe food and water</p>	 <p>Practise good sanitation and proper waste disposal</p>
 <p>Only use needles once and ensure they are sterile</p>	 <p>Don't share personal items such as toothbrushes and razors</p>	 <p>Practise safer sex, use condoms</p>

**There are vaccines to protect people from hepatitis A and B**



There is a vaccine for hepatitis E but only available in China.\*\*

**Know your risks, speak to your doctor and get vaccinated.**



Source:  
 \* World Hepatitis Day 2022 <https://www.worldhepatitiday.org/>  
 \*\* World Health Organization - Hepatitis E Fact sheet  
 This infographic has been developed for educational purposes only and is correct at the time of publication. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have any questions or concerns about any topic in the infographic, please consult your medical professional.  
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