

## Liver diseases high among people below 40

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**Average age of liver disease patients is 40-45 years but younger people also getting increasingly afflicted due to lifestyle related causes.**



The incidence of liver diseases is rising in India, especially among the younger age group and the urban poor, due to increasing alcohol abuse, a lifestyle lacking in exercise, and consumption of unhealthy high-fat food. However, liver diseases are still largely restricted to men, said doctors of Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru, on the eve of the World Liver Day.

“Liver diseases are currently among the top 10 causes of death in India, a situation that is going to get worse in the coming years,” said **Dr. C Vikram Belliappa, Consultant Surgical Gastroenterologist, Vikram Hospital Bengaluru.** “According to the WHO, about 10 lakh people are diagnosed with liver cirrhosis every year in India. The average age of liver disease patients is 40-45 years, but now much younger patients are also getting affected due to alcoholism, high fat diet and a lifestyle lacking in exercise. Urban poor are the most hit, though males have a much higher incidence of liver diseases than females.”

Added **Dr. Dheeraj Karanth C, Medical Gastroenterologist, Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru:** “The cure for severe liver diseases is a liver transplant. New approaches such as stem cell therapy is also being researched. Fatigue, jaundice, itching and loss of appetite are some early symptoms of liver diseases, though symptoms usually don’t appear till the disease is well advanced, so early diagnosis is crucial. Prevention is much better than cure. People should maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and low-fat diet. It is also important to take alcohol only in moderation, get Hepatitis B vaccination, and follow safe sex practices.”

In a significant initiative, as many as 32 doctors out of the total 70 working at the Vikram Hospital Bengaluru pledged to donate their organs, including the liver, to help save lives. They also vowed to create awareness about the increasing incidence of liver diseases in the society.

Said **Dr. Somesh Mittal, CEO, Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru:** “It is heartening to see over 30 doctors at our hospital pledge to donate their organs, including their liver, to help give a new lease of life to desperate patients waiting for years for an organ

transplant. By practicing what they preach, they have set an example to the rest of the society.”

**Dr. C Vikram Belliappa, Consultant Surgical Gastroenterologist, Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru,** offers the following tips to prevent liver diseases:

- Ø Adopt healthy lifestyle and have a balanced diet
- Ø Eat a diet which is low in fat, derived from all food groups: grains, proteins, dairy products, fruits, vegetables and fats. Include green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, apple and walnut in your diet
- Ø Ensure safe blood transfusions to avoid contracting Hepatitis A, B and C. Regular immunisation of Hepatitis B is important
- Ø Say no to alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Ø Follow safe sexual habits
- Ø Exercise regularly