

Metabolic Dysfunction Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD)

We are contacting you with some information about a common liver condition called MASLD. You may also have heard it described by its previous name, NAFLD (non alcoholic fatty liver disease).

What is MASLD?

MASLD is a term used when extra fat builds up in the liver for reasons *other than* alcohol. It is very common, and in the UK it is often linked with everyday lifestyle factors such as diet, being overweight, higher cholesterol, or Type 2 Diabetes. Many people with MASLD feel completely well and have no symptoms, although some notice tiredness or a feeling of discomfort in the upper right side of the abdomen.

For most people, MASLD does not cause serious problems. However, if fat continues to build up, it can sometimes lead to inflammation in the liver. Over many years, this may cause some scarring. Only a small proportion of people will go on to develop more advanced liver changes, but we monitor everyone carefully so that we can support you early if needed.

Importantly, MASLD also increases your risks of developing cardiovascular disease (conditions that affect your heart and blood vessels) which can increase your risk of a heart attack or stroke. You may already be at an increased risk of this due to other conditions you have such as high blood pressure, diabetes or high cholesterol and we can support you to manage this risk and monitor you yearly.

What can I do to help manage MASLD?

There is currently no specific medication for MASLD, but the positive news is that healthy lifestyle changes can make a *big difference*. Even small, gradual steps can help reduce liver fat, improve inflammation, and may even reverse early changes. Helpful measures include:

- Gentle, steady weight loss if you are overweight, a goal of 10% body weight loss can control and in some cases reverse MASLD
- Reducing alcohol intake and considering abstinence
- Taking regular exercise
- Eating a balanced, nutritious diet

We appreciate that lifestyle changes can feel challenging, but we are here to support you and can direct you to resources that many people find useful.

How will we monitor MASLD at NHS Highland?

As part of our routine MASLD follow-up, we will invite you for blood tests (liver function and platelets) every **three years**. We use these results to calculate a score called the **FIB-4**, which helps us understand whether there is any risk of developing liver scarring.

- If your score stays low, we will continue to review it every three years.

- If the score rises above a certain level, we may arrange further checks at the liver clinic. These could include more specialised blood tests or an ultrasound scan of the liver. This does *not* necessarily mean there is a serious problem — it simply allows us to look more closely and offer the right support.

We will also invite you for a **yearly** check up due to your increased cardiovascular risk which will include checking your blood tests, blood pressure, height, weight, and discussing diet, smoking and alcohol. You may already attend the practice for this due to other conditions you have.

Useful resources

You may find these trusted sources helpful for guidance on healthy lifestyle changes:

- Mediterranean diet ideas: <https://patient.info/features/diet-and-nutrition/mediterranean-diet-plan>
- Information from the British Liver Trust: <https://britishlivertrust.org.uk/information-and-support/liver-conditions/masld-nafld-and-fatty-liver-disease/>
- NHS healthy eating advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

If you have any questions or worries about any of this information, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We are here to help and support you.