



MASH and Your Lifestyle: Which Changes Make the Biggest Impact?

Shoring up your diet and activity level can help protect your liver and boost your overall health.



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Managing MASH Means Changing My Lifestyle

Jeff and Susan discuss making choices that promote liver health, like eating healthy, exercising, and managing weight — and why sustainable change is key to living well with MASH.

What's more, the right habits can not only help you manage MASH, but also benefit your entire body. They can also help you manage comorbidities such as [high blood pressure](#), [high cholesterol](#), [obesity](#), and [type 2 diabetes](#), says Kara Wegermann, MD, a gastroenterologist and transplant hepatologist at Duke Health in Durham, North Carolina, and a volunteer for the [American Liver Foundation](#).

Not sure where to start? These tips can help.

What I Wish I Knew: Focus on Sustainable Changes

“ MAKE CHANGES THAT YOU CAN INCORPORATE INTO YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE, SO THAT THEY'RE REALLY GOING TO BE SUSTAINABLE. ”

— Susan Avallone, diagnosed with MASH in 2003



Certain lifestyle changes can help you manage MASH and your overall health. Starting small can help you stick to your goals.

5 percent of your body weight would be 10 pounds.

Diet modifications: Following a [Mediterranean diet](#) is often recommended for MASH. It focuses on fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, legumes, whole grains, and healthy fats, such as olive oil and fatty fish, and also limits saturated fats and processed foods.^[2] If overhauling your diet seems intimidating, start small by avoiding sweet beverages, reducing snacking, and substituting empty carbs for higher protein options, says Wegermann.

Exercise: Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking or biking, each week.^[3] “People often feel like that means they have to go to the gym for 30 minutes a day ... but that’s hard to do right off the bat,” says Wegermann. “So, if you have 10 minutes, do 10 minutes. That’s better than zero minutes.” Not to mention, you don’t even have to go to the gym: Taking a walk counts as exercise!

What I Wish I Knew: It's Okay to Ask for Help

“ I ASKED TO SEE A NUTRITIONIST SO WE COULD COME UP WITH EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING TO SATISFY ME AND MY DESIRE TO COOK AND GIVE ME ENOUGH NUTRITION. ”

your own. An exercise specialist — such as a physical therapist, personal trainer, or exercise physiologist — can help you create an activity plan you can stick with based on your interests and limitations. And a nutritionist or registered dietitian can develop an eating plan that's nutritious but will still fill you up.^[4] They can also teach you how to read food labels, measure portion sizes, and even log foods on your smartphone.

These specialists can also help you navigate any roadblocks that may be preventing you from making healthy lifestyle choices. "Some of my patients live in food deserts and have trouble accessing fresh fruits and vegetables," says Wegermann. "They may have never learned how to cook fresh food. They may be relying on fast food due to their work schedule. So there can definitely be a lot of barriers."

What Your Doctor Wants You to Know: Start Small to Build Healthy Habits

"We say, 'Exercise more and eat healthy,' but I think we underestimate how hard these changes really are," says Wegermann. "Try to start small: Take [that] 10-minute walk [mentioned above] during your lunch break. Cut out one soda. Swap chips for veggies and hummus. And build on those changes over time."

You should also keep in touch with your doctor about treatment, as one medication is currently available, and more may be coming down the pike to help treat MASH and protect liver health.^{[4][5]} "The options to intervene on this disease are increasing every day," says Wegermann.

What type of dietary plan do you recommend? How many foods should I eat more or less of?

Can I still eat my favorite foods in moderation?

How much exercise should I be getting?

What activities are safe for me to try?

Do I need to lose weight? If so, how much should I aim for?

Are there any specialists I can work with to help me make these lifestyle changes?

Are there any treatment options available that can help me manage MASH?

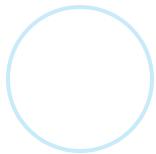
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