

Targeted Treatment for Alpha-1 Related Liver Problems

Your healthcare practitioner will suggest targeted treatment based on how Alpha-1 affects your liver. Let's take a look at some of these treatments.

Targeted treatment for poor digestive function

Ensure proper nutrition.

Treatments for babies and children focus on ensuring normal growth and nutrition. If oral feeding is an issue, they may need a feeding tube. Poor growth and problems with oral feedings in infants with Alpha-1 are common. They even occur in infants without serious liver problems.

Boost fat digestion.

If you can't digest fat, you may lack critical vitamins. This can lead to major health problems.

Vitamin	Health impact of vitamin deficiency
Vitamin K	Life-threatening bleeding
Vitamin D	Rickets (bone damage in children)
Vitamin A	Brain and nervous system problems, like blindness and confusion
Vitamin E	Nerve damage in the hands and feet (<i>Peripheral neuropathy</i>)

Targeted treatment for poor excretory function

Stop severe itching.

Low bile flow makes life unpleasant because it causes severe itching. That can have a big impact on sleep, school and work, and quality of life.

Treatments include:

- Antihistamines to block itching
- Oral medicines to remove excess bile

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- Drugs to increase bile flow

Reduce ammonia build-up.

Severe liver damage causes waste products to build up in your blood. This may make you feel sleepy and confused. But, you can take medicine to flush waste products from your intestines.

Targeted treatment for poor synthetic function

Reduce fluid buildup.

Low blood albumin levels may lead to fluid build up and swelling. When it happens in your belly, it's called *ascites*.

Your healthcare practitioner may recommend a range of treatments to reduce fluid buildup:

- A low-salt diet. (Not recommended for children.)
- Drugs to remove excess fluid from your body (*diuretics*)
- Draining the fluid with a needle (*paracentesis*)
- IV albumin (injecting albumin into the blood)

Boost blood clotting.

Your liver makes many proteins, including some clotting proteins. When you have liver disease, you may have low levels of these clotting proteins. If your clotting issues stem from poor digestion, taking vitamin K may help.

Targeted treatment for cirrhosis & portal hypertension

Some Alphas with cirrhosis and portal hypertension live normally for decades without other health problems. However, others may have swelling and fluid build-up (*ascites*). We discussed treatment for those symptoms earlier.

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Avoid or limit certain drugs.

Patients with portal hypertension should avoid aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These drugs may lead to serious bleeding in liver disease patients. If you have mild to moderate liver disease, talk to your healthcare practitioner. You may be able to take small doses.

Reduce severe bleeding.

Portal hypertension (high blood pressure in the portal vein) may lead to severe bleeding from the esophagus (the tube connecting your throat and stomach), stomach, intestines, or rectum.

Treatments include:

- Endoscopic surgery (inserting a flexible tube with a camera)
- Medicine (oral and IV)
- Blood transfusions
- Shunt surgery
- Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPS)

Targeted treatment for infections

Chronic liver disease can weaken your immune system. Therefore, your healthcare practitioner should watch for signs of [infection](#). Call your healthcare practitioner if you have a fever with any of these other symptoms:

- abdominal pain
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- bleeding
- jaundice

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Liver disease patients can develop severe infections. They may occur in the blood, liver, or built-up fluid in the belly. Your healthcare practitioner may treat these infections with [oral or IV antibiotics](#).

For more in-depth information on this topic, please visit the [Big Fat Reference Guide \(BFRG\)](#). If you are enrolled in AlphaNet's Subscriber Portal, you can access the BFRG [here](#).