

Foods and Supplements to Avoid for those with Hepatitis/Liver Disease

Raw shellfish (oysters and clams) have been the source of many outbreaks of hepatitis A. People with chronic liver disease are at increased risk of complications and poor outcomes if they become infected with hepatitis A. Therefore, all people with chronic liver disease who intend to eat shellfish should get the hepatitis A vaccination. (see Chapter 24 for more information on vaccinations). There have been some reports of people with hemochromatosis dying from eating raw shellfish that was contaminated with the bacteria *Vibrio Vulnificus*. High iron levels has been linked to fatal infection with this bacteria, therefore, it is probably wise for people with hemochromatosis, other liver disease with high iron levels such as hepatitis C, and cirrhosis due to any liver disease to avoid raw or poorly cooked shellfish. Well- cooked shellfish on the other hand is not dangerous.

Many wild mushrooms found in North America and Europe contain deadly toxins known as phallotoxins (phalloidin and alpha amanitin). These mushrooms are renowned for causing liver failure, or even death, when consumed. As a precaution, all patients with liver disease are advised to avoid eating wild mushrooms, especially if self-picked. See Chapter 21 for more information concerning these mushrooms.

Shark cartilage is a nutritional supplement that has been purported to be of benefit to some people with cancer. There is a possible, although unproven, association between shark cartilage and drug-induced hepatitis. People with chronic liver disease are best advised to avoid this supplement until it has been evaluated further.

Aflatoxin, a hepatotoxin (common in Asia and Southern Africa, but uncommon in the United States), is produced by a fungus (*Aspergillus*). This fungus is a potential contaminant of foods that have been stored for prolonged periods of time in damp, warm conditions. The most commonly infected foods are peanuts and corn. In some countries, aflatoxins have been linked to hepatitis, cirrhosis, and liver cancer. This is discussed in more detail in my book.

Saccharin, a sweetener, has been associated with acute hepatitis. Even though this association has not been conclusively proven, people with liver disease are best advised to avoid saccharin.

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