

- Liver

LOSING YOUR GLOW? A FATTY LIVER COULD BE THE CULPRIT

From adult acne to dry, itchy skin and a dull complexion, a distressed liver can leave your skin without lustre. Experts tell us how to watch out for these signs and repair the damage

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Noticing a spurt in acne, dark spots, a lacklustre complexion or dry rough patches on your face despite a foolproof skin care regimen? It could be a distressed liver stealing your glow. “Liver ailment can lead to unusual symptoms such as stubborn acne in adults, dry and rough skin as well as dull complexion. These could be tell-tale signs of the silent disease — Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) — caused due to fat accumulation in the liver,” says Dr Mohsin Wali, internal medicine specialist. “A growing number of young adults are being impacted by it. Sedentary lifestyles, work-from-home induced stress are to be blamed,” he adds.



Poor liver acne is a thing!

Liver's job, as the toxin processing organ of your body, is to filter out any substance that could harm your health. It is also an important player in hormonal detox and oestrogen metabolism, says dermatologist Dr Niketa Sonavane.

“When the liver becomes overburdened with too much caffeine, or inflammatory by products of high glycemic and trans fat laden foods, or with hormone such as androgens or oestrogens, the overload can result in skin problems such as adult acne, eczema, psoriasis and rosacea. In some cases, a breakout may be due to acne rosacea. Surprisingly, several of these patients have fatty liver,” says Dr Sonavane.

Understanding fatty liver

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) affects people who don't consume alcohol, but have a fat deposition of more than 5% on their liver. People with obesity or diabetes who consume 20% or more of their daily calories from fast food have severely elevated levels of fat in their livers, states a new study from Keck Medicine of University of Southern California (USA).

“Hypertension, obesity and dyslipidemia (imbalance of lipids such as cholesterol, proteins, etc.) can also cause the condition. Also, up to 70% obese patients with type 2 diabetes have NAFLD,”

says Dr AK Jhingan, diabetologist.

In women, obesity and insulin resistance are considered as the main factors related to NAFLD in PCOS. Data shows that excess of androgen, which is the main culprit of PCOS and is interrelated to insulin resistance, may contribute to the development of NAFLD, cites a paper by the National Library of Medicine, US.

Liver, the unsung hero

Liver breaks down fats, nutrients and medication to spread them throughout the body. Ayurveda expert Nidhi Pandya Bhansali says, "When we eat excessively oily, spicy, or sugary items, the liver takes on more load. This leads to fat accumulation on it, resulting in NAFLD."

If left untreated, it can develop into Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), which in addition to fat deposits, causes inflammation in liver cells, leading to liver scarring. "In the last couple of years, cases of NASH have increased manifold. With lifestyle tweaks, the condition can be reversed in the initial stages. Lose the excess weight, restructure your diet and get moving," says Dr Jhingan.

Repairing the damage

Experts say the damage to the organ can be repaired with some easy changes in daily routine. "Ban junk food and bad quality cooking oil. Increase intake of vitamin C and E, and omega-3 fatty acids. One can also take colostrum (first milk produced by mothers) that is commercially available if recommended by an expert," explains Dr Wali.

At least 30 minutes of movement everyday is recommended to boost metabolism, improve blood circulation to the liver and promote insulin production. "If your BMI is high, aim to lose 10% of your current body weight," says Dr Vineet Gupta, gastroenterologist.

Yoga and naturopathy also aid those on the path of recovery. "Aasans such as vakrasana, dhanurasana, mandukasana, trikonasana, halasana, and kapalabhati, anulom vilom, nadishudhi and uddiyana banda help," says yoga expert Dr Soundarya KR.

Eat wisely

Food prepared with moderate spices and fats is essential in making sure that liver does not take much stress. Bhansali recommends using herbs and spices such as kadhi patta and turmeric in daily cooking. She also stresses on eating veggies such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, fenugreek as well as lentils, whole grains and oatmeal. Drinking green, or dandelion tea and neem juice are also vital for good liver health. "Excessive medication, processed carbohydrates and even stale food put extra load on the liver as their breakdown is not simple. Even paneer and gravy-based foods need to be taken in moderation," adds Bhansali. Supplements such as dandelion root extract, milk thistle and artichoke leaf extract can also help boost liver health.