

The liver disease crisis- how you can help

The British Liver Trust is calling for urgent action to help turn the tide on rising liver disease deaths, worsening health inequalities and the huge burden obesity and alcohol are placing on the NHS.

We are facing a liver disease crisis across the UK. Since 1970, deaths due to liver disease have increased by 400%. Mortality rates from other major 'killer' diseases have been improving or staying stable – liver disease is the exception. Liver disease is the biggest risk factor for liver cancer which is the fastest growing cause of cancer death in the UK.



What we are calling for:



- Policies to be introduced that address severe harm caused by alcohol misuse, obesity and viral hepatitis including the economic costs and pressures facing the NHS.
- Effective pathways for the early detection of liver disease to help save lives and improve outcomes.
- Measures to address the variation in treatment, outcomes and care for patients across the UK.
- An improvement in survival rates for liver cancer through earlier identification of high-risk groups for surveillance.

Prevention | Tackle alcohol harm and the unhealthy food and drink environment



90% of liver disease is preventable. The main risk factors are excess alcohol consumption, obesity and viral hepatitis:

- Nearly 80% of alcohol specific deaths in the UK were caused by alcohol-related liver disease.
- Around 7700 people die from alcohol-related liver disease each year.
- Up to 1 in 5 people in the UK have non-alcohol related fatty liver disease (NAFLD).
- Childhood obesity levels in England are increasing at the fastest pace ever recorded (2019 - 2021 data). Up to 38% of obese children are estimated to have NAFLD.

Urgent population level health policies are needed to address alcohol harm and rising obesity to reduce the number of preventable liver disease deaths.

Early Diagnosis | Accelerate prevention by earlier diagnosis of liver disease



Early diagnosis can provide liver disease patients with more options for treatment and managing the disease, yet 75% of people diagnosed with cirrhosis are found when it's too late for effective treatment. Sadly, alcohol-related liver disease is x12 more likely to present at a late stage than other liver conditions.

Accelerating early detection by implementing full patient care pathways for the early diagnosis of liver disease will save lives and relieve NHS pressure.

Health Inequality | Address variation in liver disease patient care and outcomes



Liver disease is a barometer for poor health. Death rates for liver disease are 4x higher in the most deprived areas compared with the most affluent. Liver disease patients face huge variation and inequalities in care and outcomes across the UK.

A comprehensive review of adult liver services would help identify which areas need to make improvements to address severe variation and inequalities in liver disease care and outcomes.

Liver cancer | Improve outcomes for less survivable cancers



Liver cancer is the fastest rising cause of cancer death in the UK with a 13% survival rate. As diagnosis of liver cancer normally happens so late, it has one of the lowest survival rates of any cancer in the UK. Sadly, 5,800 people die from liver cancer in the UK each year. The biggest risk factor for developing liver cancer is pre-existing liver disease, which makes earlier diagnosis of liver disease vital in order to save lives.

How you can help?

Contact the British Liver Trust, who can provide written and oral questions, opinion pieces and tailored briefings to support you in raising the profile of this overlooked issue in Parliament, with constituents or for debates or events on liver disease and topics such as alcohol, obesity, cancer, and health inequalities. Email: publicaffairs@britishlivertrust.org.uk