

For the Patient Diagnosed with Hepatic Encephalopathy

What Is Hepatic Encephalopathy?

Hepatic encephalopathy is a type of confusion or change in thinking patterns, alertness, and/or awareness that can occur when people have liver disease. Hepatic encephalopathy can happen when people have cirrhosis or high blood pressure in their liver.

What Causes Hepatic Encephalopathy?

When the liver is unable to perform its function of filtering and processing normal substances in the blood, those substances can break down in ways that are harmful to the brain. This can cause changes in thinking patterns and confusion. Hepatic encephalopathy can be triggered by changes in the electrolytes in our blood, infections, intestinal bleeding, and other causes.

What Is The Treatment?

The treatment for hepatic encephalopathy is to remove the harmful substances from the body. This is usually done by giving medications that help eliminate these substances through bowel movements instead of processing them through the liver. It is also important to correct or treat triggers such as changes in the electrolytes in our blood, infections, and bleeding in the intestines.



Can I Prevent Hepatic Encephalopathy From Coming Back?

It is important to take your medications as prescribed when you leave the hospital to prevent hepatic encephalopathy from coming back. If you are unable to get your medications or if you experience side effects that prevent you from taking your medications, please notify your doctor right away.

Do I Have To Come Back To The Hospital If I Have Symptoms Again?

Please seek medical attention if you have any of the signs or symptoms of hepatic encephalopathy. These can include: slow speech, confusion, difficulty walking, difficulty carrying on a conversation, change in your sleeping pattern, or jerky movements. Pay close attention to your body and have your friends, family, or caregivers make note of changes they may notice.

What Is The Prognosis?

Hepatic encephalopathy is a serious illness. It is a sign of advanced liver disease. Hepatic encephalopathy may reoccur. It can be treated and prevented with medications. There are also more specialized therapies your gastroenterologist or hepatologist may discuss with you.

What Else Should I Know About Hepatic Encephalopathy?

After a hospitalization for hepatic encephalopathy, it is important not to drive or operate heavy machinery until you consult your doctor. Hepatic encephalopathy can cause very minor changes to your thinking that you may not even notice, which can make it dangerous for you and other drivers.

If you have questions about next steps regarding your care plan once you are discharged from the hospital, you may call:

_____ at _____.