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Fatty Liver: More Than an Ultrasound Finding

Fatty liver is often discovered unexpectedly during an abdominal ultrasound.

For many people, the report may simply say “Grade I” or “Grade II fatty liver,” leaving an important question unanswered:

What does this mean for my health?

Understanding MASLD

Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) is closely associated with metabolic conditions such as obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes, dyslipidaemia and high blood pressure.

It should therefore not always be viewed as an isolated liver problem.

Liver Fat and Liver Fibrosis Are Not the Same Thing

The amount of fat seen on ultrasound does not, by itself, tell us everything about the severity of liver disease.

An important part of evaluation is identifying people who may be at greater risk of liver fibrosis and therefore require additional assessment.

Normal Liver Enzymes Do Not Always Mean a Normal Liver

MASLD may be present even when liver enzymes are within the laboratory reference range.

Clinical assessment therefore needs to consider liver tests alongside imaging, metabolic risk factors and appropriate non-invasive fibrosis assessment where indicated.

Improving Metabolic Health Can Improve Liver Health

Weight management, physical activity and appropriate treatment of diabetes, lipid abnormalities and other metabolic conditions form an important part of MASLD management.

For many individuals, sustained improvement in metabolic health can result in meaningful improvement in liver health.

Key Takeaway

A fatty liver report is not just about liver fat. It can be an important signal to look more closely at overall metabolic health and fibrosis risk.