

INTERNATIONAL NASH DAY

PRESS RELEASE

Today 1 in every 3 Odia has NAFLD and almost one in 6 has NASH! This figure is going to rise further if steps are not taken to check this Pandemic. What does this mean? One in Six Odias are at risk to develop advanced liver diseases! Its time we took steps to check this else it may be too late....

1. Why International NASH Day?

Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH) has today emerged as the commonest cause of liver disease and a major public health problem globally. The situation is particularly of concern in India. Odisha also has a high prevalence of NASH. But this condition is not well understood by the people as well as doctors. The 1st International NASH Day is thus being observed on 12 June to spread awareness as well as disseminate scientific and medical knowledge in the general population and the doctors. It is also being observed in Odisha with conduct of various events.

2. What is NAFLD and What is NASH?

NAFLD is an acronym for Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. In this condition there is Fatty liver or accumulation of excess fat in liver without significant alcohol intake. This is the commonest liver disease all over the world. NAFLD includes a Spectrum of Liver Disorders ranging from simple steatosis or fatty liver to NASH [Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis] where in addition to excess fat, there is inflammation and fibrosis to Cirrhosis of Liver and Liver Cancer.

3. Why does NAFLD or NASH occur?

This occurs due to an imbalance between the calories intake and energy expenditure. Certain foods do have an extra tendency to promote fatty liver. These include fatty food, junk food, cola drinks and excess fruits. Lastly genes and gut microbiota also have some role in the causation.

4. What are the consequences of NASH or NAFLD?

The consequences are mainly two folds: Liver related and Heart related. Aggressive NASH can develop Cirrhosis of liver with its consequences including liver failure requiring liver transplantation, and even Liver Cancer. Besides these persons are more likely to die from cardiac problems especially coronary artery disease [heart attack]. It is believe that within the next few years, in USA, NASH will become the commonest reason for Liver Transplantation!

5. How common is NAFLD in Odias?

NAFLD is very common in Odisha. A study done about a decade and half ago had shown that at least one fourth of Odias have fatty liver disease. Further, one fourth of these patients have definite NASH, and another one fourth probable NASH. The prevalence has gone up further in recent times.

6. Doctor, I had gone for a scan, and the report says I have fatty liver although I do not consume alcohol. What does it mean?

It means the person most likely has NAFLD [Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease]. This person should be examined for obesity/overweight, and high blood pressure.

An anthropometric study is a must. These include simple measurements like Weight, Height and Waist Circumference. BMI [Body Mass Index] can be calculated from Weight and Height. $BMI = \text{Weight [in Kgs]} \div \text{Square of Height [in Metres]}$. A person with Height 1.8 Metres and Weight 75 Kg would be $75 \div 1.8^2 = 23.15$.

Besides, the person should be tested especially for liver functions [LFT] and disturbances in blood sugar and lipids like cholesterol and triglycerides. Further, the person should undergo a Fibroscan to measure liver stiffness. Some patients may need liver biopsy.

7. Can it be prevented? How can it be prevented?

Yes it's a completely preventable disease. There should be better awareness about NAFLD/NASH amongst the general public and doctors about various aspects of NAFLD.

It can be prevented by:

- (i) Not indulging in overeating.
- (ii) Avoiding regular intake of junk/fatty food and cola drinks.
- (iii) Treating risk factors like Diabetes/High blood pressure/ Dyslipidemia if present.
- (iv) Avoidance of sedentary lifestyle and Regular exercises.
- (v) Keeping a check on Weight/BMI/Waistline. Keep your BMI below 23 [preferably below 22] and Waist should not exceed half of Height.

8. How do you treat NASH?

1. Risk Factors [High Blood sugar or cholesterol] should be looked for and treated.
2. Food intake should be controlled and regular physical exercise should be promoted.
3. Weight should be brought down by at least 5%; Target should be waist not more than half of height and BMI not more than 22 [or weight less than $22 \times [\text{Height in Metres}]^2$].
4. Fatty food/junk food/cola drinks should be avoided.

9. Has any research been conducted on NAFLD in Odisha?

Odisha is the number one centre in our country in the field of research on NASH. More than a dozen papers on NAFLD/NASH have been published in National and International Medical Journals.

A study in Cuttack earlier showed that the risk factors associated with NAFLD are Diabetes, high blood pressure, sedentary lifestyle, obesity, consumption of meat/fish, fried foods and excess sugared tea.

Another important study showed that half of the NASH cases in our people are different from the Western patients in that they donot have Insulin Resistance. As a result of these studies, Prof SP Singh has been made the Chairman of the INASL Taskforce on NAFLD.

10. What is your message for International NASH Day?

Our Message is:

1. NASH is a preventable disease.
2. Awareness has to be created amongst primary care doctors, specialists as well as amongst the general public about causes, consequences and prevention of NASH.
3. Better life style and its accompanying benefits should be promoted by the doctors, government and media.
4. Best way to create awareness is through the schools where children should be imparted comprehensive lessons in prevention of liver diseases including NASH.
5. Avoid overeating, avoid junk foods and beverages and do regular exercises like brisk walking.

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