

How Does My Doctor Know if I Have NASH?

You and your doctor may have been talking about the possibility that you may have a liver disease called nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), which is a type of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). NAFLD is a condition in which excess fat is stored in your liver. NASH is when you also have inflammation and cell damage that causes scarring in your liver called fibrosis.

Why Does My Doctor Suspect NASH?

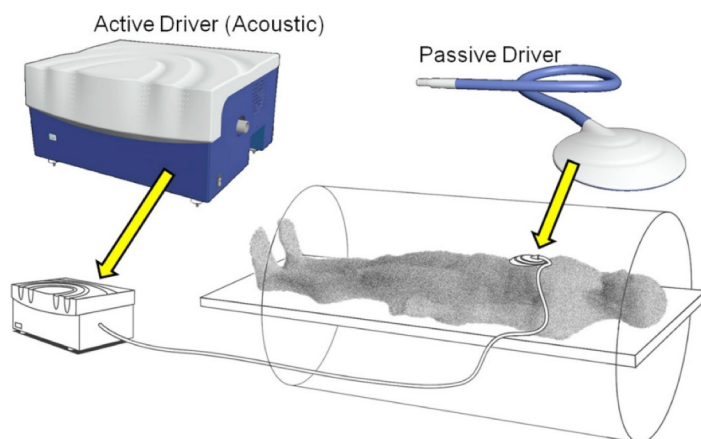
You may have some risk factors that may mean you have NASH, such as metabolic syndrome, diabetes, obesity, older age, and Hispanic ethnicity. Your doctor may want to order some tests to check the health of your liver.

Will I Need a Blood Test? What Do the Results Mean?

Some tests are blood tests, where different enzymes and blood cells are measured. These measurements can help your doctor understand more about how your liver is functioning and whether your liver may have scar tissue (fibrosis). You may hear your doctor mention something called an NAFLD fibrosis score (NFS) or an FIB-4 score. Both scores use the results of your blood test, as well as other risk factors you may have, in a formula that can figure out how much fibrosis is in your liver.



What Other Tests Should I Know About?



A patient pictured having a magnetic resonance elastography (MRE).

Venkatesh SK, et al. J Magn Reson Imaging. 2013; Copyright © 2012 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

The results of the blood test can let your doctor know if additional tests should be ordered. If you have more severe signs of fibrosis, you may need some imaging done to get a better picture of the health of your liver. These tests are considered “noninvasive;” that is, they do not involve breaking the barrier of your skin and they are painless. These may include magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or ultrasound technology. A magnetic resonance elastography (MRE) uses MRI. Another test, called a vibration-controlled transient elastography (VCTE), uses ultrasound. Both map a picture of the liver and can show if there is fibrosis or steatosis (extra fat) in your liver. An MRI-proton density fat fraction (MRI-PDFF) is another test that can measure how much fat is in your liver.

What if I Need a Biopsy?

A biopsy will be performed only if your doctor is very sure that you have advanced NASH. This test is considered “invasive.” Tissue will be taken from your liver and examined in a laboratory.

My Doctor Has Talked About Staging: What Does That Mean?

Staging is a way to identify if you are at low risk for NASH or if NAFLD has advanced. If the test results show that you might have advanced fibrosis or steatosis, you are more likely to have a liver biopsy to confirm the diagnosis.

You may find it helpful to ask your provider these questions about NASH.

Why do you think I have NASH?

What kinds of tests will you order?

What do the results of these tests tell me about my health and about NASH?