

Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis

A Practical Guide For Patients



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Introduction: Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis

Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC) is a chronic, progressive liver disease that causes inflammation and scarring of the bile ducts. This leads to bile buildup in the liver, which can result in liver damage, cirrhosis, and eventually liver failure. The exact cause of PSC is unknown, but it is often associated with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), particularly ulcerative colitis. PSC typically affects adults, with a higher prevalence in men. Symptoms may include fatigue, jaundice, itching, and abdominal pain. Although there is no cure, treatments aim to manage symptoms and slow disease progression.

Key Takeaways

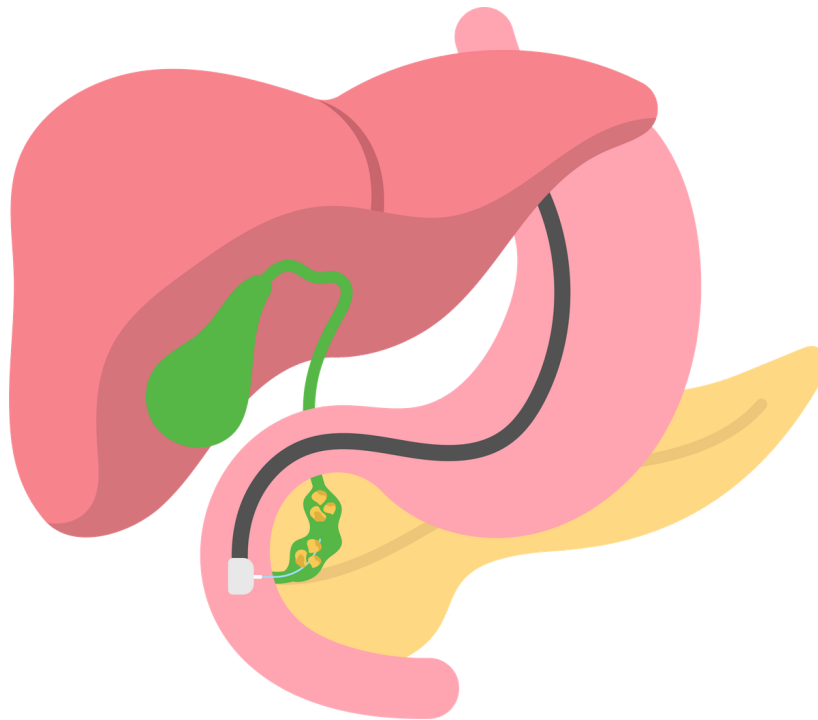
- PSC is a chronic liver disease causing inflammation and scarring of bile ducts.
- It often occurs alongside inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), particularly ulcerative colitis.
- The exact cause remains unclear, but genetic and environmental factors may contribute.
- Common symptoms include fatigue, jaundice, itching, and abdominal pain.
- There is no cure, but treatment focuses on managing symptoms and slowing progression.
- In advanced cases, liver transplant may be necessary.



What Causes Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis?

Known Causes:

- **Autoimmune Reaction:** PSC is believed to be an autoimmune disease where the body's immune system attacks bile ducts.
- **Genetic Factors:** Family history and certain genetic mutations may increase susceptibility.
- **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD):** Most commonly associated with ulcerative colitis, though also seen in Crohn's disease.
- **Environmental Factors:** Infections, toxins, or other environmental triggers may contribute to the onset of PSC.
- **Chronic Inflammation:** Ongoing liver or bile duct inflammation may play a role in disease development.



Common Signs & Symptoms

Common signs and symptoms of **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** include fatigue, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), itching (pruritus), abdominal pain, dark urine, pale stools, and unexplained weight loss. These symptoms worsen as the disease progresses.

Core Symptoms Include:

- **Fatigue:** Persistent tiredness that significantly impacts daily activities.
- **Jaundice:** Yellowing of the skin and eyes due to bile buildup.
- **Itching (Pruritus):** Intense itching, especially on the palms and soles.
- **Abdominal Pain:** Discomfort or pain in the upper right abdomen.
- **Weight Loss:** Unexplained weight loss as liver function deteriorates.

Severe cases can also cause:

- **Cirrhosis:** Scarring of the liver that impairs its ability to function.
- **Liver Failure:** Loss of liver function, which may require a transplant.
- **Portal Hypertension:** Increased blood pressure in the liver's portal vein, leading to complications like varices.
- **Bile Duct Cancer:** Increased risk of cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer).
- **Ascites:** Fluid buildup in the abdomen due to liver dysfunction.

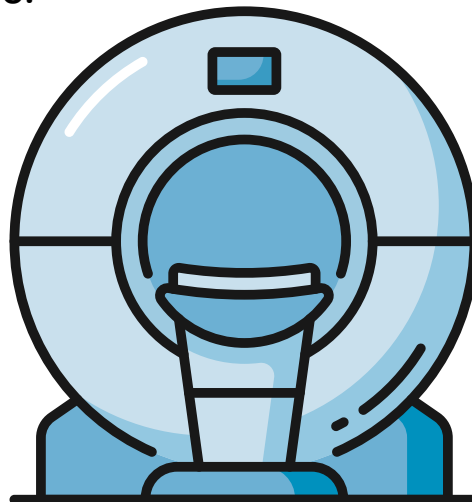


Diagnosis & Medical Testing

Diagnosis of **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** includes blood tests to detect liver function abnormalities, imaging tests like MRI or MRCP to visualize bile duct damage, and liver biopsy for confirmation. Endoscopic procedures may be used to assess bile duct strictures.

Diagnostic Tools:

- **Blood Tests:** To check liver enzymes, bilirubin levels, and autoimmune markers.
- **Magnetic Resonance Cholangiopancreatography (MRCP):** Non-invasive imaging to visualize bile ducts and detect narrowing or strictures.
- **Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP):** A procedure to examine and treat bile duct obstructions.
- **Ultrasound or CT Scan:** To assess liver damage and detect complications like cirrhosis.
- **Liver Biopsy:** In some cases, a biopsy may be performed to confirm PSC and assess liver damage.

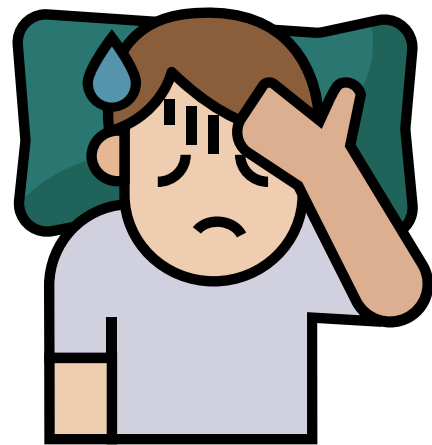


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A diet for **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** should focus on liver health by including nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limiting alcohol, processed foods, and high-fat meals is crucial for managing the condition.

Key Insights:

- PSC is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation and scarring of bile ducts.
- It is often associated with inflammatory bowel disease, particularly ulcerative colitis.
- Symptoms like fatigue, jaundice, and itching are common but can vary.
- There is no cure, but treatments focus on managing symptoms and slowing progression.
- Liver transplant may be necessary in advanced stages due to liver failure.
- Regular monitoring through imaging and blood tests is crucial to track disease progression.



Medications & Treatment Options

Medications for **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** include ursodeoxycholic acid (UDCA) to improve liver function, and obeticholic acid for those unresponsive to UDCA. Immunosuppressive drugs may help manage inflammation. In severe cases, liver transplant is the only curative option.

Treatment Options

- **Ursodeoxycholic Acid (UDCA):** First-line medication to improve liver function and slow disease progression.
- **Obeticholic Acid:** Used for patients not responding to UDCA to help reduce liver inflammation.
- **Endoscopic Procedures:** To manage bile duct strictures or blockages.
- **Immunosuppressive Medications:** In some cases, corticosteroids or other immunosuppressants can reduce inflammation.
- **Liver Transplant:** Considered in advanced stages when liver function fails or cirrhosis occurs.

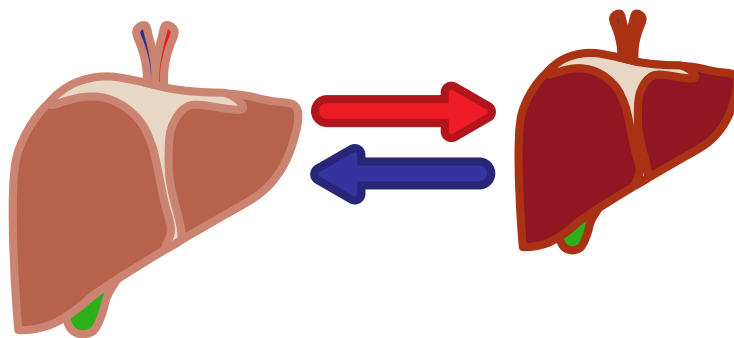


Advanced Therapies & Procedures

Advanced therapies for **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** include liver transplantation in cases of liver failure, endoscopic dilation or stenting to treat bile duct obstructions, and immunosuppressive therapy for inflammation management. Ongoing monitoring with imaging and blood tests is essential.

Therapy Options:

- **Ursodeoxycholic Acid (UDCA):** The primary treatment to improve liver function and slow disease progression.
- **Obeticholic Acid:** For patients who do not respond to UDCA, it helps reduce liver inflammation.
- **Immunosuppressive Drugs:** Used to manage severe inflammation.
- **Endoscopic Procedures:** To address bile duct strictures or blockages.
- **Liver Transplant:** Considered in cases of end-stage liver disease or liver failure.



Coping With Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis

Coping with **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)** involves managing symptoms with prescribed medications, maintaining a liver-friendly diet, and regular medical check-ups. Staying hydrated, managing fatigue through rest, and avoiding alcohol can help improve quality of life and prevent complications.

Practical Strategies

- **Follow a Liver-Friendly Diet:** Focus on nutrient-rich foods, avoid alcohol, and limit processed foods.
- **Manage Fatigue:** Prioritize rest and break tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to support liver function.
- **Monitor Symptoms Regularly:** Keep track of any changes and attend follow-up appointments.
- **Join Support Groups:** Connect with others who understand PSC for emotional support and shared coping strategies.



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Q1: What causes Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)?

A: PSC is an autoimmune disease, often linked to inflammatory bowel disease like ulcerative colitis.

Q2: How is PSC treated?

A: Treatment includes UDCA, obeticholic acid, endoscopic procedures, and liver transplant in severe cases.

Q3: What are the symptoms of PSC?

A: Fatigue, jaundice, itching, abdominal pain, and weight loss are common signs of PSC.

Q4: Can PSC be cured?

A: There is no cure for PSC, but treatment can manage symptoms and slow progression.



Take Action

To manage **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)**, take action by following prescribed treatments, maintaining a liver-friendly diet, and staying hydrated. Regular monitoring through blood tests and imaging, avoiding alcohol, and managing symptoms like fatigue can improve quality of life and prevent complications.

For additional resources, visit GastroDoxs.com.

**Your health starts with knowledge.
Take the first step today!**

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT



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