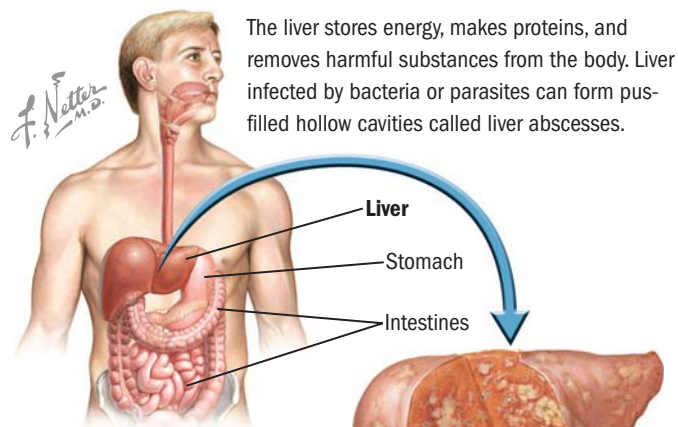
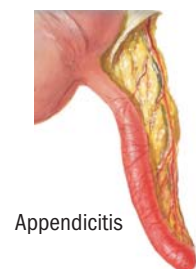


MANAGING YOUR LIVER ABSCESS



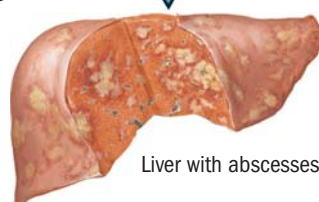
The liver stores energy, makes proteins, and removes harmful substances from the body. Liver infected by bacteria or parasites can form pus-filled hollow cavities called liver abscesses.



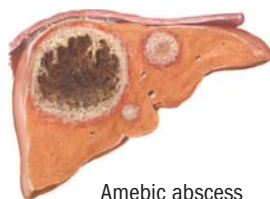
Appendicitis



Diverticulitis



Liver with abscesses



Amebic abscess

Bacteria can cause abscesses called pyogenic abscesses (pus forming). Most of these abscesses in the belly are due to appendicitis, diverticulitis, and gallbladder infections and from there can spread to the liver. Parasites such as an ameba also cause abscesses (called amebic abscesses).

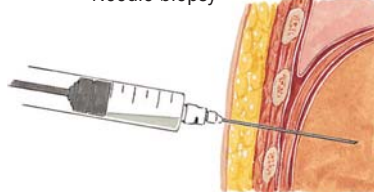


Symptoms may not start right away. When they do, they usually include fever, sweats, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, and pain in the right upper abdomen.

Scanner for ultrasound



Needle biopsy



Your doctor finds liver abscesses by using ultrasound and CT. Often the only way to tell the type of bacteria causing the abscess is by doing a needle biopsy of the liver.

What Are Liver Abscesses?

The liver is an important organ with many functions: it stores energy, makes proteins, and removes harmful substances from the body. When infected by bacteria or parasites, the liver can form small holes that fill with pus. Any pus-filled hollow pockets or cavities in the liver are called liver abscesses.

What Causes Liver Abscesses?

Bacteria can cause abscesses that are called pyogenic abscesses (meaning forming pus). Infections spread from appendicitis, diverticulitis, and gallbladder cause most pyogenic abscesses. Parasites such as the ameba *Entamoeba histolytica* also cause abscesses (called amebic abscesses). Most of these occur because of poor sanitation. People get these parasites by eating food contaminated by stools (bowel movements) of infected people. Drinking and eating contaminated water and food can also transfer parasites to people. Worldwide, amebic abscesses are more common than pyogenic abscesses.

What Are the Symptoms of Liver Abscesses?

Symptoms may not appear right away. Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Pain over the right upper part of the abdomen (belly) usually occurs.

Other less common symptoms are chest pain, loss of appetite, and jaundice (yellow color of skin and eyes).

How Are Liver Abscesses Diagnosed?

The doctor usually finds liver abscesses by ultrasonography, which uses sound waves to make pictures of the liver. Computed tomography (CT) of the abdomen is better for finding abscesses. A needle biopsy of the abscess may be done when antibiotic treatment is not working well. With this procedure a needle is passed through the abdomen into the abscess. Tissue and fluid are taken out and are studied with a microscope. Cultures are done to grow and identify the specific cause of the abscess.

MANAGING YOUR LIVER ABSCESS

Most people need two or three different drugs to treat the abscess. Usually, antibiotics are given intravenously until fever and infection are gone. You may need to be hospitalized for severe infections.



Similar to a liver biopsy to diagnose your condition, a needle may need to be passed into your abscess to drain pus if you have pyogenic abscesses.

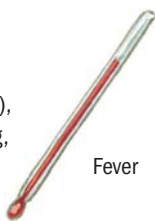


Don't drink alcohol when taking medicines for liver abscesses.



Jaundice

Call your doctor if your skin or eyes turn yellow (jaundice), or you have fever, chills, severe abdominal pain, vomiting, or diarrhea.



Fever

How Are Liver Abscesses Treated?

The best treatment is draining pus and using antibiotics. Most people need two or three different antibiotics. Usually, antibiotics are given intravenously until fever and infection are gone.

People with pyogenic abscesses may have pus drained from the abscesses. This is done by passing a needle through into the abscesses and draining the pus. Drainage of an amebic abscess isn't needed, unless antibiotic treatment doesn't work or a pyogenic cause is suspected.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing a Liver Abscess:

- ✓ **DO** remember that most people with pyogenic liver abscesses improve within 2 weeks of antibiotic treatment and drainage. The fever usually resolves in most people with amebic abscesses in 4 to 5 days of treatment.
- ✓ **DO** take your antibiotics as instructed. Finish taking all the medicine, even if you feel better.
- ✓ **DO** wash your hands before eating.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have severe abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, chills, and sweats.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your skin turns yellow.
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink alcohol when taking medicines prescribed for liver abscesses.
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink tap water in countries where water may be contaminated.
- ⊗ **DON'T** ignore symptoms.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget that untreated pyogenic liver abscess is fatal in nearly 100% of cases!

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Tel: (404) 639-3311
- Website: <http://www.cdc.gov>