PRIMARY BILIARY CHOLANGITIS (PBC)

WHAT IS PBC?

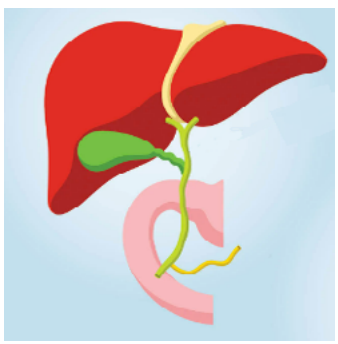
PBC is a rare cholestatic liver disease with increasing prevalence that impacts approximately 100,000 people in the U.S.[1]

It is an autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation and irreversible scarring of the liver with the potential to lead to liver failure.

90%
of PBC cases predominantly affect women.

PBC and the liver

Over time, PBC progressively destroys liver bile ducts, which are essential to digestion, absorption of certain vitamins, and ridding the body of cholesterol, toxins, and worn-out red blood cells.[2]



PBC is commonly diagnosed during middle age, initially affecting individuals between ages 45 to 65 years.[3]

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Common early signs and symptoms of PBC include fatigue and itchy skin.

As the disease progressively worsens, people with PBC can also experience[3]:

- Bone, muscle, and joint pain, along with fractures from osteoporosis
- Dry eyes and mouth
- Abdominal pain, including from spleen swelling and fluid back-up
- Swollen feet and ankles
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- High cholesterol
- Fatty deposits on the skin or darkening of the skin unrelated to sun exposure
- Diarrhea
- Underactive thyroid
- Weight loss

Prior to diagnosis, most people seek medical care for itching or fatigue. PBC is commonly misdiagnosed for other autoimmune diseases, allergies, or other skin conditions. A diagnosis may involve multiple appointments and several specialists prior to a confirmatory diagnosis from a liver test, antibody test, or liver biopsy.[1,3]

LIVING WITH PBC

The challenges of PBC can be difficult. One's physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being can be affected, especially as the disease progresses over time.

PBC can impact people's daily activities. This can lead to feelings of sadness, depression, loss of purpose, or social isolation.[4]

Certain people living with PBC may be at a higher risk of disease progression which can lead to serious complications, including:

- **Cirrhosis:** Scar tissue replaces healthy liver tissue and prevents it from functioning normally.
- **Portal hypertension:** Scar tissue in the liver partly blocks and slows the normal flow of blood, causing high blood pressure in the portal vein.
- **Liver failure:** The liver stops functioning, potentially requiring a liver transplant.
- **Liver cancer:** Those with cirrhosis caused by PBC and men with PBC have an increased risk for liver cancer.[3]

There is no cure for PBC, and treatment is focused on slowing disease progression and symptom management like inflammation or liver fibrosis.

Currently, not all patients respond to initial treatment. When treatments fail, a liver transplant might prolong life.[1]

PBC causes poor sleep schedules.

For more support information and resources, visit:

American Liver Foundation or PBCers

Hear from Sabrina about her experience with PBC.

References

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2. Bowlus CL, Gershwin ME. The Diagnosis of Primary Biliary Cirrhosis. Autoimmun Rev. 2014 Apr-May; 13(0):441–444
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4. Sivakumar T, Kowdley KV. Anxiety and Depression in Patients with Primary Biliary Cholangitis: Current Insights and Impact on Quality of Life. Hepat Med. 2021; 13: 83–92