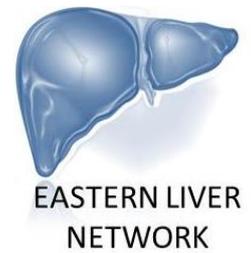


AUTOIMMUNE HEPATITIS (AIH)



What is AIH?

AIH is an autoimmune chronic liver disease in which the body's own immune system causes damage to your liver cells. If left untreated it can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and a higher risk of liver cancer.

What causes AIH?

AIH is an autoimmune disease, in which the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks the cells in your liver. No one knows why this happens. Some people with AIH have relatives with the condition. This suggests that people with AIH may have an inherited predisposition to the disease, which is finally triggered by something in the environment. We do not, however, know what the environmental trigger is (or triggers may be).

30-50% of people diagnosed with AIH have another autoimmune condition, such as thyroid disease, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis or Type 1 diabetes.

What are the symptoms of AIH?

Common symptoms associated with AIH include jaundice, dark urine and lethargy. Because of related conditions, some people with AIH may have joint pains, diarrhoea and feel generally unwell. Most patients with well-controlled AIH have no symptoms at all.

What is the treatment for AIH?

There is no cure for AIH but there are effective treatments. All patients are initially treated with a high dose of steroid, either prednisolone or budesonide. This helps to stop liver inflammation. Once the liver inflammation is more stable a longer term immunosuppression tablet, usually Azathioprine or Mycophenolate is added and the steroid is reduced depending on your liver blood tests. The main goal of treatment is to stop the liver inflammation by getting your immune system back under control.

Reducing the liver inflammation will improve your symptoms, improve your liver blood tests, reduce the degree of scarring and help prevent long-term liver damage and liver failure. Once treatment has started it is continued long-term.

Where can I receive more information and support?

Autoimmune hepatitis: autoimmunehepatitis.org.uk

The British Liver Trust: www.britishlivertrust.org.uk Helpline: 0800 652 7330 (10:00 to 15:00 Monday to Friday)

AIH-UK : www.uk-aih.com

Psychological Wellbeing Service offers treatments across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough www.cpft.nhs.uk Tel: 0300 300 0055

What research is happening in AIH

We need to understand further the cause of the disease and genetics of the disease. If you would be interested in taking part in research or would like to discuss it further, please call 01223 256225 or e-mail Sister Abi Ford on: hepatologyresearch@addenbrookes.nhs.uk