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Cirrhosis

Overview

Cirrhosis is a consequence of chronic liver disease and is characterized by progressive loss of liver function due to replacement of liver tissue by fibrotic scar tissue as well as regenerative nodules. The most common complication caused by cirrhosis is ascites, the accumulation of fluid in the peritoneal cavity (the space between the two membranes that separate the organs in the abdominal cavity from the abdominal wall). Ascites is associated with a poor quality of life, increased risk of infections, and a poor long-term outcome.

Cirrhosis is most commonly caused by alcoholism and hepatitis C and was the twelfth leading cause of death in the United States in 2000. In advanced stages, cirrhosis is irreversible and the only treatment option is a liver transplant.