

## **Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)**

It is estimated that around 10 % of our population have Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD). Women at the age of 40 years are among those at a higher risk of developing NAFLD.

NAFLD is a condition where large vacuoles of lipid accumulate in hepatocytes. This accumulation or deposit of fat in liver cells can cause the liver to enlarge. The lipid within the vacuoles is a particular type of lipid known as triglyceride.

People, who are obese, recovering from hepatitis, diabetics, and frequent alcohol intake, on medication such as corticosteroid and malnourished, have a higher prevalence of NAFLD. In Hong Kong, obesity, excess nutrition and alcohol are the most common causes for fatty liver. This, however, does not suggest youngsters who are slim do not suffer from NAFLD.

NAFLD is usually asymptomatic. Nausea, vomiting, fatigue, jaundice and a loss of appetite are some of the common symptoms associated with NAFLD. Some may even develop in liver cirrhosis and liver cancer.

NAFLD can be diagnosed by blood tests or ultrasound, which can detect NAFLD in 97% of the cases.

Up till now, there is still no effective treatment for NAFLD. The best method for treating NAFLD is prevention. Abstinence from alcohol, frequent exercise and having a balanced diet that has less oily and starchy food are some of the most effective ways of preventing NAFLD.