

PRIMARY SCLEROSING CHOLANGITIS (PSC)

WHAT IS PRIMARY SCLEROSING CHOLANGITIS (PSC)?

Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC) is a rare chronic **liver disease**, in which the **bile ducts (both intra-and extra-hepatic bile ducts)**¹—the tubes that carry bile from the liver to the small intestine—become **narrowed and can harden** (sclerosis) from inflammation and scarring (fibrosis). Over time the scar tissue can build-up and block parts of the bile duct completely. The accumulation of bile can gradually damage the liver and result in **cirrhosis or liver failure**.



Bile is a yellow-brown or green fluid produced in the liver and stored in the gallbladder, and **aids digestion**.

PSC affects

1:10,000²

PSC more commonly affects men than women



PSC is generally diagnosed between the ages of 25 to 60, although it can occur at any age



WHAT CAUSES PSC?

PSC is an **autoinflammatory disease**. It is unclear what triggers the inflammation of the bile ducts, some people may have a **higher genetic risk**, and those with **existing autoimmune conditions** may also be more likely to be affected by PSC.

About **70% to 80%** of people with PSC also have **inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)**, most often ulcerative colitis.³



SYMPTOMS

Many people will initially have no symptoms and PSC and is often diagnosed through routine blood tests that show abnormal liver results.

Symptoms can include:



FATIGUE

the most common symptom and often considered to be the most **life-limiting**



ABDOMINAL PAIN

often in the **upper right hand part** of the abdomen



SEVERE ITCHING (PRURITUS)

often on the palms of the **hands** and soles of the **feet**



FEVER AND CHILLS

which may indicate a **bacterial infection** in the bile ducts



JAUNDICE

yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes



DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

the impact of living with PSC on **quality of life** can lead to depression and anxiety

TREATMENT

There is currently **no cure** or proven treatment to slow the progression of PSC. Care is focused on **regular monitoring** and **management** of symptoms. Regular scans check for changes and complications, and monitor for liver and gallbladder cancer for those with a more advanced stage of the disease, to aid early detection and treatment.

There are procedures to open blocked ducts, while **liver transplant** is the only known cure for advanced disease or liver failure.



References

- [1. https://bestpractice.bmj.com/topics/en-gb/847](https://bestpractice.bmj.com/topics/en-gb/847)
- [2. https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/primary-sclerosing-cholangitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20355797](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/primary-sclerosing-cholangitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20355797)
- [3. https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/patient-information/primary-sclerosing-cholangitis-psc](https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/patient-information/primary-sclerosing-cholangitis-psc)