

Primary Biliary Cirrhosis

The liver produces bile, which is stored in the gall bladder and added to the digestive tract via bile ducts to help break down dietary fats. Primary biliary cirrhosis (PBC) is an autoimmune condition characterised by the chronic inflammation and subsequent scarring of the bile ducts within the liver. The cause is unknown, although researchers have ruled out alcohol and diet as possible triggers. Women are 10 times more likely to develop PBC than men, for reasons unknown. The disease is usually diagnosed later in life, between the ages of 35 and 60 years. There is no cure, but treatment can slow the progression of the disease and alleviate symptoms. PBC seems to be associated with a number of other autoimmune diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma and Sjogren's syndrome, although the reasons for this are not clear.