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# HEMOCHROMATOSIS

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What is it and what can you do about it?

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## The Importance of Screening:

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The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases makes the stakes clear:

“Without treatment, iron may build up in the organs and cause complications, including cirrhosis, diabetes, irregular heart rhythms or weakening of the heart muscle, arthritis, and erectile dysfunction. If a health care provider diagnoses and treats the iron overload caused by hemochromatosis before organ damage has occurred, a person can live a normal, healthy life.”

The screening process for hemochromatosis is simple and straightforward. “Health care providers use medical and family history, a physical exam, and routine blood tests to diagnose hemochromatosis.”

## Hemochromatosis Basics:

Hemochromatosis, a.k.a. iron overload disease, is a buildup of excess iron in the blood. This buildup can cause liver damage and heart problems, along with lasting issues that can affect the endocrine glands, joints, and pancreas.

Detecting hemochromatosis can be tricky because its early symptoms are similar to the symptoms for many other conditions, while its later systems vary widely based on what organs are affected by the overload. The American Liver Association asserts, “Many people have no symptoms, even in advanced cases. Joint pain is the most common complaint of people with hemochromatosis.”

The American Liver Foundation has good news. “Treatment for

