

# Living with PBC<sup>®</sup> Glossary

**Alanine aminotransferase (ALT):** An enzyme primarily located in the liver that helps the body get rid of nitrogen; ALT levels can get higher when the liver is injured

**Albumin:** A protein made in the liver; when albumin levels drop, it can be a sign of inflammation from liver illness

**Alkaline phosphatase (ALP):** An enzyme that can be traced in the blood and can be used to track how well a person is responding to their primary biliary cholangitis (PBC) treatment

**Alpha-1 antitrypsin:** A protein that is primarily produced in the liver and can be used to warn doctors that certain diseases may be developing

**Antimitochondrial antibodies (AMAs):** Antibodies are proteins that the body releases to identify and neutralize harmful molecules in the body such as bacteria and viruses; AMAs are antibodies that attack the membranes of certain cells and are seen in most, but not all, people who have PBC

**Ascites:** An accumulation of fluid in the abdominal area of the body that is a symptom of later-phase PBC

**Aspartate aminotransferase (AST):** An enzyme that helps rid the body of excess nitrogen; AST can be elevated as a result of damage to tissues of the body, including the liver; AST is also known as serum glutamic oxaloacetic transaminase

**Autoimmune disease:** A disorder where the body attacks its own cells as if they were a virus or bacteria

**Autoimmune hepatitis:** A condition in which the body's immune system attacks the liver cells, leading to inflammation of the liver

**Autoimmune thyroid disease (Hashimoto's disease):** A disorder causing chronic inflammation of the thyroid gland, which may affect its function

**Bile:** A fluid made in the liver and stored in the gallbladder; when released by the liver, bile helps with digestion

**Bile ducts:** Tubes in the body that carry bile from the liver to the small intestine; in PBC, bile ducts are damaged, which can cause bile to build up in the liver; bile buildup can become toxic and can further damage the bile ducts

**Bilirubin:** A yellow bile pigment formed during the breakdown of red blood cells, it's processed by the liver and excreted in bile; when the liver is not working properly, bile can accumulate in the blood and tissues of the body and can make the skin, and sometimes the eyes, appear yellow (jaundice)

**Biomarker:** A biological substance which is easily measurable and can help indicate that there is an underlying medical condition

**Brain fog:** Difficulty in concentrating and processing information and short-term memory lapses

**Celiac disease:** A disorder in which individuals are not able to tolerate gluten, a protein found in wheat, leaving individuals unable to absorb nutrients

**Cholangitis:** Inflammation of the bile ducts

**Cholestasis:** Slowing down or stopping the normal flow of bile

**Chronic:** Lasts a long time and does not go away

**Cirrhosis:** A serious condition of the liver where the organ stops working because of an accumulation of scar tissue; cirrhosis can cause chronic liver failure and may require a liver transplant

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**Computerized tomography (CT) scan:** A noninvasive diagnostic imaging test that uses X-ray technology to produce images of the inside of the body and provide information about injury, disease or changes to the liver, gallbladder, and biliary tract; it can also be important in identifying complications of the disease such as esophageal varices and ascites

**Contagious:** Capable of being transmitted from one person to another

**CREST syndrome:** A disorder that results in hardening of the skin and consists of calcinosis, Raynaud's disease, esophageal dysmotility, sclerodactyly, and telangiectasia

**Depression:** A mental state characterized by feelings of sadness, despair, and discouragement; depression can range from normal feelings of "the blues" to a serious disorder that interferes with daily life

**Enzyme:** A protein molecule that helps facilitate chemical reactions in the body

**FibroScan<sup>®</sup>:** A noninvasive ultrasound-based test used to measure liver scarring, or fibrosis

**Fibrosis:** The formation of excessive fibrous tissue in response to tissue damage

**Fluid retention:** When the body holds on to liquids that otherwise would be removed; the liquids accumulate and can cause swelling

**Gamma-glutamyl transferase (GGT):** An enzyme that generally occurs in the cells of the kidney; can be measured as part of a liver function test to indicate potential liver damage

**Hepatocellular carcinoma:** Cancer of the liver

**Inflammation:** The increase of immune cells to a particular group of cells or tissues as a response to cellular injury; typically involves pain, heat, redness, and swelling

**Inherited:** Passed from parent to child through the genes

**Jaundice:** A yellow appearance of the skin and/or eyes caused by having too much bilirubin in the body

**Liver biopsy:** A procedure that removes a small amount of tissue from the liver; the sample can then be closely looked at to make a diagnosis, or to see how damaged the liver may be

**Liver panel tests:** Blood tests used to help diagnose and monitor liver disease or damage

**Liver specialists:** Also known as "gastroenterologists" or "hepatologists," a liver specialist is a doctor whose focus and training is in treating people with liver disease

**Liver ultrasound:** A noninvasive diagnostic tool that uses sound waves to create images of the liver and bile ducts

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan:** A noninvasive diagnostic tool that uses magnets and radio waves to capture detailed images of the liver and biliary tract; it can also reveal the stage of liver fibrosis

**Osteoporosis:** A condition where bones become weaker and more fragile

**Portal hypertension:** Abnormally high blood pressure in a major vein of the liver that is a complication of cirrhosis

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**Primary sclerosing cholangitis:** A chronic disease that damages the bile ducts inside and outside the liver; different from PBC, which affects primarily small bile ducts inside the liver

**Progressive:** Becoming worse over time

**Prothrombin time (PT):** A measure of the clotting ability of the blood

**Pruritus:** Itching of the skin that can affect a specific spot on the skin or can be felt all over

**Rare disease:** In the United States, a disease is considered rare (or orphan) if it affects fewer than 200,000 people

**Raynaud's disease:** A disorder that causes restriction of oxygen flow to the fingers and toes, resulting in discoloration of the skin in response to stress or cold

**Rheumatoid arthritis:** A disorder in which the joints are chronically inflamed

**Sjögren's syndrome:** A disorder in which the body's mucus-secreting glands, such as the tear ducts of the eyes and saliva glands of the mouth, stop working properly over time

**Symptoms:** Symptoms of PBC include itching (pruritus), fatigue (tiredness), dry eyes and mouth, and trouble remembering or concentrating

**Varices:** Enlarged and abnormally windy veins