

**Abstract**

**The Clinical Importance of an Increase in Serum  
Gamma-glutamyltransferase Concentration**

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**Objectives:** Increased gamma-glutamyltransferase (GGT) concentration has mainly been used as a biologic marker of alcohol drinking and liver diseases. However, some recent reports have suggested that serum GGT concentration may be an early biomarker of oxidative stress and associated with chronic diseases like hypertension, DM, hyperlipidemia, CHD, stroke etc. In this study, we analysed the factors associated with increased serum GGT level and evaluated the clinical application of serum GGT in predicting the risk of chronic diseases.

**Methods:** The data were collected from 15,546 periodic health examinations, 9,660 males and 5,886 females, done at one university hospital from 2001 to 2003. We analysed self-questionnaire, physical examination and laboratory data. Statistical analyses (t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and logistic regression analysis) were done by SPSS for windows 10.0.

**Results:** Mean serum GGT levels were quite different according to age, sex, BMI, smoking and alcohol drinking (all P-value <0.001), but were not different by regular vitamin intake or not (P-value = 0.117). There was significant correlation between serum GGT level and the variables (of age, BMI, blood pressure, Hb, fasting blood sugar, total cholesterol, AST and ALT) (all P-value <0.001). In sex-specific multiple regression analysis, increased serum GGT level was significantly associated with age, alcohol drinking, smoking, blood pressure, fasting blood sugar and ALT in males (all P-value <0.001), and with age, alcohol drinking, smoking, Hb, blood pressure, total cholesterol and ALT in females (all P-value <0.05). In sex-specific logistic regression analysis, increased serum GGT level was significantly associated with risk of 'clinical abnormalities'. This risk increased about 13-fold in males and 4.6-fold in females for serum GGT level over the third quartile, compared with under the first quartile.

**Conclusions:** Serum GGT level is increased not only by alcohol drinking or liver diseases, but also by many other factors associated with chronic diseases and behavioral factors. Thus many factors should be considered in evaluating an increase in GGT level, even when within the upper normal range. Serum GGT level may be a predictor for the early development of chronic diseases.

**Key Words:** Gamma glutamyltransferase, Chronic diseases, Oxidative stress

logic marker) 가 (Lim et al., 2004).

(Jousilahti et al., 2002; Teschke et al., 1977), 가 가

가 (Lee et al., 2003a).

가 (Lee et al., 2003; Whitfield, 2001). 가 가

가 3

(oxidative stress) 가

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	2001	2003
(counteracting) 가	15,546	
(free radicals) 가	9,660 (62.1%), 2	5,886 (37.9%)

가 (Whitfield, 2001). X-

( , ) 8

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( , 2002; Jousilahti et al., 2002; Pintus & Mascia., 1996; Stranges et al., 2004; Wannamethee et al., 1995; Whitehead et al., 1996; Yamada et al., 2003), 가 (bio-

**Table 1.** Serum GGT level according to subjects' general characteristics

		N	%	Mean	SD	P-value*	Scheffe's <sup>†</sup>
age(yr)	20-29	2545	16.4	24.09	24.88		a
	30-39	3604	23.2	39.80	40.31		c
	40-49	4657	30.0	40.25	60.48		c
	50-59	2848	18.3	40.32	51.72		c
	>60	1837	11.8	33.85	39.30	<0.001	b
sex	male	9660	62.1	47.51	55.81		
	female	5886	37.9	19.09	21.01	<0.001	
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	<20	2070	13.3	27.58	46.35		a
	20-23	4840	31.1	30.90	42.45		b
	23-25	3874	24.9	39.95	57.93		c
smoking status	>25	4385	28.2	44.46	42.57	<0.001	d
	nonsmoker	7494	48.2	25.36	28.89		a
	ex-smoker	1595	10.3	45.96	47.99		b
smoking amount (pack/day)	current smoker	5364	34.5	51.49	63.57	<0.001	c
	<1/2	1233	7.9	44.83	57.47		a
	1/2-1	3126	20.1	49.19	61.92		a
	1-2	1239	8.0	62.3	69.92		a,b
smoking duration (yr)	>2	47	0.3	79.38	76.08	<0.001	b
	<5	753	4.8	36.32	47.03		a
	5-9	1392	9.0	42.21	46.87		b
	10-19	2844	18.3	51.61	54.36		c
drinking capacity (soju- bottle)	20-29	1537	9.9	57.80	80.49		c
	>30	785	5.0	51.23	53.47	<0.001	c
	<1/2	4689	30.2	28.62	38.41		a
	1/2-1	4243	27.3	49.52	57.17		b
	1-3/2	1353	8.7	55.37	48.45		b
drinking frequency	>2	512	3.3	64.83	108.50	<0.001	c
	none	6488	41.7	23.73	24.03		a
	2-3/month	3401	21.9	31.84	34.76		b
	1-2/week	3563	22.9	48.53	49.94		c
ethanol intake (g/week)	3-4/week	1179	7.6	71.16	70.71		d
	daily	387	2.5	87.65	146.27	<0.001	e
	none	6488	41.7	23.73	24.03		a
	<27	1503	9.7	25.12	29.44		a
	28-144	1096	7.1	37.27	42.91		b
exercise (frequency/ week)	144-300	4176	26.9	46.01	47.28		c
	>300	1538	9.9	76.95	95.31	<0.001	d
	none	7514	48.3	33.74	48.88		a,b
	1-2	4666	30.0	41.35	46.70		c
	3-4	1732	11.1	39.88	52.90		b,c
vitamin intake	5-6	429	2.8	31.59	35.40		a
	daily	672	4.3	33.17	34.32	<0.001	a
	no	10852	91.9	36.37	45.61		
	yes	961	8.1	33.96	38.69	0.117	

\*by Student t-test or ANOVA

<sup>†</sup>The same letters indicate non-significant difference between groups based on scheffe's multiple comparison test

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SPSS for windows 10.0

Student t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation analysis,

(BMI)

(SBP)

(DBP)

(Hb),

(FBS),

(T.chol),

AST, ALT,

Table 1

(±2SD) 47.51 IU/L(±111.62)

19.09 IU/L(±42.02)

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(clinical abnormali-

ties)'

, BMI,

(1) SBP 140 mmHg, (2) DBP 90 mmHg, (3) FBS 110 mg/dl (4) T.chol 200 mg/dl, (5) AST 41 IU/L, (6) ALT 36 IU/L.

(P<0.001).

Table 2. Serum GGT level according to BP, Hb, FBS, T.chol, AST and ALT

variables	n	mean	SD	P-value*
SBP (mmHg)	male <140	7278	43.01	45.39
	140	2117	61.97	65.85
	female <140	5000	18.15	17.67
	140	784	24.95	34.82
DBP (mmHg)	male <90	7893	43.50	46.23
	90	1499	67.23	69.22
	female <90	5317	18.45	18.22
	90	466	26.09	40.23
Hb (g/dl)	male <13	140	54.20	117.31
	13	9258	47.19	49.67
	female <12	862	15.33	13.86
	12	4927	19.74	21.96
FBS (mg/dl)	male <110	7947	43.83	46.08
	110	1452	66.21	70.80
	female <110	5319	18.23	19.88
	110	470	28.80	29.40
T.chol (mg/dl)	male <200	6194	41.97	46.83
	200	3205	57.56	57.71
	femal <200	3871	16.95	15.95
	200	1918	23.40	28.13
AST (IU/L)	male <41	8708	41.23	35.87
	41	691	123.63	115.55
	female <41	5644	17.91	14.57
	41	145	64.93	85.18
ALT (IU/L)	male <36	6610	33.74	27.51
	36	2789	79.40	74.97
	female <36	5376	16.89	12.21
	36	413	47.64	58.10

\*by Student t-test

, BMI, , -

(Mean=36.37 vs 33.96)  
(P=0.117).

Table 2 SBP, DBP, Hb, T.chol, FBS, AST  
ALT

Table 6 ' , BMI (P<0.001), BMI (P<0.05).

SBP, DBP, FBS, T.chol, AST ALT  
(P<0.001). Hb 가 3 4  
Hb 가 1 (first quartile)  
(reference group) 가  
Table 3 가 3  
(third quartile) 가 13  
( 4.5 ).  
(P<0.001). AST ALT  
(Pearson's coefficient=0.386, 0.420).

Table 4 Table 5

, BMI,  
, Hb, DBP, FBS, T.chol, ALT  
SBP AST DBP ALT  
(multicollinearity)  
가  
Table 1  
,  
가  
(Arndt et al., 1998),

**Table 3.** Pearson's correlation coefficients between serum GGT and other variables

variables	mean	SD	Pearson's coefficient	P-value
age (yr)	43.6	12.71	0.059	<0.001
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	23.46	3.48	0.118	<0.001
SBP (mmHg)	124.94	17.46	0.201	<0.001
DBP (mmHg)	76.07	11.59	0.224	<0.001
Hb (g/dl)	14.21	2.84	0.261	<0.001
FBS (mg/dl)	98.56	22.90	0.151	<0.001
total cholesterol (mg/dl)	187.59	34.95	0.147	<0.001
AST (IU/L)	24.34	23.32	0.386	<0.001
ALT (IU/L)	28.73	27.77	0.420	<0.001

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 (± 2SD) 47.51 IU/L (± 111.62), 19.09 IU/L (±42.02),  
 5-55 IU/L, 2-20 IU/L ( , 1996),  
 가  
 (Table 4 Table 5)  
 , DBP, FBS, T.chol, ALT  
 , Hb  
 가

BMI  
 Hb  
 가  
 가 (Nakanishi et al., 2000), BMI  
 ALT  
 (Skurtveit & Tverdal., 2003; Stranges et al., 2004)  
 BMI DBP ALT  
 (Pearson's coefficient=0.235, 0.164, all P<0.001),  
 (Interaction) Hb  
 Hb 가  
 ( , 2002)  
 가  
 가 (Table 4 Table 5),

**Table 4.** Multiple regression analysis for the relationship between serum GGT and other variables in male

variables	SE	P-value
age (yr)	0.057	0.041
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	-0.002	0.131
drinking frequency	0.227	0.406
smoking amount	0.083	0.419
Hb (g/dl)	0.009	0.462
DBP (mmHg)	0.109	0.043
FBS (mg/dl)	0.068	0.019
T. chol (mg/dl)	0.088	0.014
ALT (IU/L)	0.362	0.015

adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.267

Model

serum GGT

=-94.3415+.241 (age)-.026 (BMI)+10.045 (drinking frequency) + 3.769 (smoking amount)-.423 (Hb)+.495 (DBP)+.141 (FBS)+ .133 (T.chol)+.596 (ALT)

**Table 5.** Multiple regression analysis for the relationship between serum GGT and other variables in female

variables	SE	P-value
age (yr)	0.076	0.022
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	0.011	0.081
driking frequency	0.087	0.324
smoking amount	0.029	0.942
Hb (g/dl)	0.025	0.209
DBP (mmHg)	0.038	0.024
FBS (mg/dl)	0.086	0.014
T. chol (mg/dl)	0.055	0.008
ALT(IU/L)	0.392	0.014

adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.219

Model

serum GGT

=-25.937+.116 (age)+.067 (BMI)+2.312 (drinking frequency) +2.277 (smoking amount)+.433 (Hb)+.070 (DBP)+.096 (FBS) -.032 (T.chol)+.444 (ALT)

BMI, T.chol, (Skurtveit & Tverdal., 2003). Jousilahti et al.,2002; Yamada et al., 2003),

가

Table 6

가 (Yamada

et al., 2003), (Block SBP, DBP, FBS, T.chol, AST ALT

et al., 2002),

Table 6

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53.8% , 2.9% (risk group)

Table 4 Table 5

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(Kim et al., 2003; Park & Kang., 2004; Sandhir et al., 2003; Sobczak et al., 2004; Vaart et al., 2004)

(Burke & Fitzgerald., 2003; 가

**Table 6.** Sex specific logistic regression analysis adjusting for age, BMI, alcohol drinking and smoking.

serum GGT	sex		SE	Exp ( )	95% CI
<1st quartile	male	.	.	.	.
	female	.	.	.	.
1st quartile	male	0.680	0.063	1.974	1.747-2.232
-2nd quartile	female	0.450	0.087	1.568	1.323-1.859
2nd quartile	male	1.448	0.066	4.254	3.737-4.842
-3rd quartile	female	0.796	0.085	2.217	1.875-2.620
>3rd quartile	male	2.577	0.086	13.161	11.123-15.573
	female	1.522	0.092	4.583	3.826-5.490

Dependent variables:  
 SBP 140 mmHg or DBP 90 mmHg or FBS 110 mg/dl or T.chol 200 mg/dl  
 or AST 41IU/L or ALT 36IU/L

(Arndt et al., 1998; Whitfield 2001), (Arndt et al., 1998; Lee et al., 2003a; Lee et al., 2003b; Wannamethee et al., 1995)

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2003

15,546

2004),

(Lim et al.,

15,546

9,660

5,886

가

(Jacob et al., 2003; Kiefer et al., 2004; Pruthi et al., 2002).

, ALT

:

( $\pm 2SD$ ) 47.51( $\pm 111.62$ ),  
19.09( $\pm 42.02$ )

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, ALT가

(Lee et al., 2003a; Lee et al., 2003b), 가

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- Gamma-glutamyltransferase  
2002;14(4):418-25.
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