

Your liver is a vital organ. Everything we eat, drink, breathe, and absorb through our skin is processed by the liver. Food is converted into energy by the liver. It helps digest alcohol and breaks down toxins. By taking care of your liver you can prevent many diseases.

At the American Liver Foundation we are committed to liver health and we are here to help you. Contact us!



Your Liver. Your Life.

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The American Liver Foundation is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for promoting liver health and disease prevention. We provide research, education, and advocacy for those affected by liver-related diseases, including hepatitis.

The information contained in this brochure is provided for information only and does not constitute medical advice. The American Liver Foundation recommends that you consult your physician before pursuing any course of treatment.

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Liver Wellness

What Everyone Needs to Know About Liver Health



Your Liver. Your Life.

Avoid Liver Disease

Hepatitis is the most common liver disease. Here is what you need to know to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Hepatitis A is spread through fecal-oral contamination. This can happen if you don't wash your hands well after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, or if you eat uncooked food prepared by an infected person.

Hepatitis B is spread through blood and other body fluids. Having unprotected sex with an infected person, using illegal injection drugs, using the razor or toothbrush of an infected person, and exposure to infected body fluids can put you at risk for hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C is spread primarily through direct contact with infected blood. It can be transmitted through contaminated needles and supplies used to inject drugs, as well as tattooing or body piercing. There is also a risk of getting hepatitis C by having unprotected sex with an infected partner.

If untreated, hepatitis B and C can become lifelong infections that can cause scarring of the liver (or cirrhosis) and liver cancer. Many infected people do not have symptoms until liver damage occurs, sometimes many years later.

Beware of exposure to harmful substances

- ☒ Toxins are processed by the liver, so it is important to limit your exposure to them.
- ☒ Use harsh cleansers and aerosol products in well-ventilated rooms.
- ☒ The additives in cigarettes pose a challenge to the liver by reducing the liver's ability to eliminate toxins.
- ☒ Insecticides and other chemicals can get to the liver through your skin and destroy liver cells. When using any garden or

household chemicals, wear a mask and gloves, cover your skin and wash well afterwards.

- ☒ Many over-the-counter and prescription medicines, even "natural" or herbal remedies, contain chemicals that can harm the liver over time. Very high doses of certain pain relievers (such as acetaminophen) can cause liver failure.
- ☒ Be sure to tell your doctor all the medicines you take, over-the-counter or prescription, before you start a new medication. Certain drug interactions, including mixing alcohol with certain medications, can harm the liver.
- ☒ Do not take large doses of vitamins, nutritional products, or herbal remedies without consulting your doctor.

Watch what you eat

- ☒ Cut down on deep-fried and fatty foods. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, rice and cereals.
- ☒ Keep your weight in check — obesity damages the liver. Exercise helps the liver by helping you maintain a healthy weight.

Watch what you drink

- ☒ Alcohol abuse is a major cause of liver damage. Men should limit their alcohol to no more than two drinks a day, and women, one drink a day. If you have any kind of liver disease stop drinking alcohol completely.
- ☒ Recent studies suggest that alcohol, tobacco, and obesity work together to increase the risk of liver cancer.

Consult your doctor about tests and vaccinations

Some liver diseases, such as hepatitis, are caused by viruses. Others are hereditary, and some are caused by reactions to drugs or chemicals. Ask your doctor about your risk, and whether you should get vaccinated to prevent hepatitis A and B.

Get tested for hepatitis B if:

- ☒ You have immigrated from Africa, Southeast Asia, Mediterranean countries, or the Caribbean, where hepatitis B affects up to 10 percent of the population.
- ☒ Anyone in your family or a sexual partner tests positive for hepatitis B. If your test is negative, your doctor will vaccinate you against the virus.
- ☒ You have multiple sexual partners.
- ☒ You are a health care or emergency services worker.

If you are pregnant and infected with hepatitis B, you can pass the infection to your infant at birth. Vaccinating your newborn baby will prevent transmission of hepatitis B in nine out of 10 cases. If your partner or anyone in your household is infected, get vaccinated for hepatitis B.

Get tested for hepatitis C if:

- ☒ You received a blood transfusion before the test for hepatitis C was developed in July 1992.
- ☒ You ever shared needles or supplies to inject drugs, even once.
- ☒ You are a health care or emergency services worker.

Trouble signs

If you experience any of these signs, contact your doctor:

- ☒ Yellow discoloration of the skin or eyes (called jaundice).
- ☒ Abdominal swelling or severe abdominal pain.
- ☒ Very dark urine.
- ☒ Pale, bloody or very dark stools.
- ☒ Chronic fatigue, nausea, or loss of appetite.

A path to liver wellness starts with awareness and action

Share these tips with your friends and family, and consult your doctor for answers to specific questions.