

# Liver Disease and Your Health

**Your liver is a vital organ. Take care of your liver by taking care of your health.!**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not mix alcohol and over the counter or prescription medicines. | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> If you drink, drink in moderation.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid breathing chemicals.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Manage your medications! Take only as prescribed. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wash your hand thoroughly.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid exposure to someone else's bodily fluids.   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid contaminated food and water.                |

**Discuss getting vaccinated for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B with your medical provider.**

## Green Flags – All Clear

## What this means ...



**If you:**

- Follow a healthy diet
- Take medicines as directed by your health care provider
- Practice good health habits, including hand washing

- Good work!

**Keep up the good work!**

## Yellow Flags – Caution

## What this means ...



**If you:**

- Have yellow color to your skin
- Have abdominal pain, or swelling in your abdomen
- Have stool that is pale, tar-colored or bloody
- Have dark urine
- Have headaches
- Itchy skin
- Whites of your eyes appear yellow
- Feel tired all the time
- Feel nauseated or lose your appetite
- Bruise easily
- Have CHF and it is not well controlled
- Have confusion

- You are at higher risk of having non-alcoholic fatty liver
- You may have liver disease or your liver disease is getting worse

**Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Instructions:**

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

## Red Flags – Stop and Think

## What this means ...



**If you:**

- Have severe shortness of breath
- Weight gain,
- Persisting fever, vomiting, and abdominal pain

You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

**If possible, notify your health care provider's office.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1**

**If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!**

# Liver Fast Facts

- Two of the best known functions of the liver are fat burning and detoxification.
- Your liver plays a major part in whether you have a fast or slow metabolism.
- The liver is the only organ in the body that can easily replace damaged cells, but if many cells are lost, the liver may not be able to meet the needs of the body.
- The liver can be considered a factory. Its many functions include:
  - Making bile, which is needed for the digestion of food, particularly fats.
  - Storing the extra glucose or sugar in the body so that it can be converted into glucose when the body needs it for energy.
  - Producing material that helps your blood clot.
  - Producing amino acids (the building blocks of making proteins), including those that help fight infections.
  - Processing and storage of iron necessary for red blood cell production.
  - Manufacturing of cholesterol and other chemicals required for fat transport.
  - Converting of waste products of body metabolism into a substance that the body excretes in the urine
  - Metabolizing medications into their active ingredient in the body, changing the chemical structure of alcohol so the body can handle it, breaking down poisons, regulating cholesterol, maintaining chemical balances throughout the body, balancing hormone levels, boosting immunity, and filtering out excess bacteria from blood.
- **Blood testing is important!** Your medical provider may order blood tests to test your liver functioning, including liver enzyme test, blood ammonia test, bilirubin test, and blood clotting test. The tests in conjunction with other tests and exams can properly diagnose your condition. Several of these tests can be thrown off by other factors, so be patient with your doctor as he goes through the test results and figures out exactly what the best diagnosis and treatment options will be.
- There are multiple types of Infectious Hepatitis:
  - **Hepatitis A** is a viral infection, primary spread through unclean hands. It is transmitted through the fecal-oral route. A vaccine can prevent this infection. Thorough hand-washing, particularly when preparing food is important.
  - **Hepatitis B** one of the most serious forms of hepatitis. There is no cure; however, medications can make the virus less active. If you develop chronic Hepatitis B, this can lead to scarring of your liver. It is spread by exposure to body fluids (needles from drug abusers, contaminated blood, and sexual contact). It can cause an acute infection but can also progress to cause chronic inflammation (chronic hepatitis) that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. The Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent infection.
  - **Hepatitis C:** IV drug users are at risk, also those with have a history of blood transfusions, hemodialysis, and health care workers. Hepatitis C can be transmitted through sexual contact.
- Alcohol is the leading cause of liver disease in North America. Anyone drinking more than five drinks per day is at serious risk of developing alcoholic liver disease. Even if you feel fine, you could have the disease; it just has not yet been detected. Once symptoms occur, doctors find the liver has already seriously been damaged.

## What can you do?

Remember! Everything you eat or drink, including medicines passes through your liver. Your liver is a vital organ. Take care of your liver by taking care of your health.

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org)



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