

Glenn's Strategies for Well-Being: The Liver

Written by Forward Times Staff
Thursday, 23 August 2012 06:47



The liver is the largest gland of the body.

In some countries, the liver is deemed so important to health that instead of a groom promising his heart in case of unfortunate circumstances, he promises his liver! It could just about be called your fountain of youth or your lifeline. You will look as old or as young as your liver is clean.

The liver can do 500 functions. The liver performs these unique and important metabolic tasks as it processes carbohydrates, proteins, fats and minerals to be used in maintaining normal body functions. Some important functions of the liver are:

- to convert the food we eat into stored energy and chemicals necessary for life and growth;
- to act as a filter to remove alcohol and toxic substances from the blood and convert them to substances that can be excreted from the body;
- to process drugs and medications absorbed from the digestive system, enabling the body to use them effectively and ultimately dispose of them;

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- to manufacture and export important body chemicals used by the body. One of these is bile, a greenish-yellow substance essential for the digestion of fats in the small intestine.

The liver is the major fat burning organ in the body and regulates fat metabolism by a complicated set of biochemical pathways. The liver can also pump excessive fat out of the body through the bile into the small intestines. If the diet is high in fiber this unwanted fat will be carried out of the body via the bowel actions. Thus the liver is a remarkable machine for keeping weight under control being both a fat burning organ and a fat pumping organ. If the diet is low in fiber, some of the fats (especially cholesterol) and toxins that have been pumped by the liver into the gut through the bile will recirculate back to the liver. The liver recirculates these bile acids back into the small intestines and the entire bile pool recycles six to eight times a day. If this recirculated fluid is high in fat and/or toxins, this will contribute to excessive weight. A high fiber diet will reduce the recirculation of fat and toxins from the gut back to the liver. This is vitally important for those with excessive weight, toxicity problems and high cholesterol.

The inclusion of plenty of raw fruits and vegetables as well as ground-up raw seeds will increase both soluble and insoluble fiber in the gut, and reduce recirculation of unwanted fat and toxins.

If the liver filter is damaged by toxins or clogged up (blocked) with excessive waste material it will be less able to remove small "fat globules" circulating in the blood stream. This will cause excessive fat to build up in the blood vessel walls. This fat may then gradually build up in many other parts of the body, including other organs, and in fatty deposits under the skin. Thus you may develop cellulite in the buttocks, thighs, arms and abdomen.

Carbohydrates, or sugars, are stored in the liver and are released as energy. In this way, the liver helps to regulate the blood sugar level, and to prevent low blood sugar. Without this balance, we would need to eat constantly to keep up our energy. Proteins reach the liver in their simpler form called amino acids. Once in the liver, they are either released to the muscles as energy, stored for later use, or converted to urea for excretion in the urine. Certain proteins are converted into ammonia, a toxic metabolic product, by bacteria in the intestine or during the breakdown of body protein. The ammonia must be broken down by the liver and made into urea which is then excreted by the kidneys. The liver also has the unique ability to convert certain amino acids into sugar for quick energy.

Fats cannot be digested without bile, which is made in the liver, stored in the gallbladder, and

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released as needed into the small intestine. Bile acts somewhat like a detergent, breaking apart the fat into tiny droplets so that it can be acted upon by intestinal enzymes and absorbed. Bile is also essential for the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K, the fat soluble vitamins.

A healthy liver filter is essential to properly regulate blood cholesterol levels. Poor liver function may increase your chances of cardiovascular diseases such as atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes.

If the liver does not regulate fat metabolism efficiently, weight gain tends to occur around the abdominal area and a "potbelly" will develop. This is not good for the waistline! It can be almost impossible to lose this abdominal fat until the liver function is improved. Once this is done the liver will start burning fat efficiently again and the weight comes off gradually and without too much effort from you. Many middle- aged people with excess fat in the abdominal area have a "fatty liver". In this condition the liver has stopped burning fat and has turned into a fat storing organ. It becomes enlarged and swollen with greasy deposits of fatty tissue. Those with a fatty liver will not be able to lose weight unless they first improve liver function, with a liver cleansing diet and a good liver tonic.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to find a fatty liver in adolescents who consume a diet high in processed and fast foods. Remember, I'm not a doctor. I just sound like one.

Take good care of yourself and live the best life possible!

Please be aware that this information is provided to supplement the care provided by your physician. It is neither intended, nor implied, to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

Glenn Ellis, author of *Which Doctor?*, is a health columnist and radio commentator who lectures, and is an active media contributor nationally and internationally on health related topics. His second book, *Information is the Best Medicine*, was released in January 2012.

For more good health information, visit: www.glennellis.com

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