



What Does Your Liver Do?

Part 1

By: Susan Higley

Weighing in at about four pounds, the liver is the largest gland of the body and the only internal organ that can regenerate itself if part of it is damaged.

The liver has many functions, perhaps the most important of which is the secretion of bile, which is necessary for the digestion of fats; it breaks fat down. Bile assists in the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) and helps to assimilate calcium. Bile converts beta-carotene into vitamin A. It promotes intestinal peristalsis as well, which helps prevent constipation.

After nutrients have been absorbed into the blood stream through the intestinal wall, they are transported by way of the hepatic portal system to the liver. In the liver nutrients such as iron and vitamins A, B12, and D are extracted from the bloodstream and stored for future use. These stored substances are utilized for everyday activities and in time of physical stress. The liver plays an important role in fat metabolism, in the synthesis of fatty acids from amino acids and sugars, in the production of lipoproteins, cholesterol, and phospholipids, and in the oxidation of fat to produce energy. The liver creates a substance called glucose tolerance factor (GTF) from chromium and glutathione. GTF acts with insulin to regulate blood sugar levels.

In addition to its important functions in digestion and energy production, the liver acts as a detoxifier. The liver combines toxic substances (including metabolic waste products, insecticide residues, drugs, alcohol, and other harmful chemicals) with substances that are less toxic. These substances are then excreted via the kidneys and bowels.

The liver is also responsible for regulating thyroid function by converting thyroxine (T4), a thyroid hormone, into its more active form, triiodothyronine (T3). Inadequate conversion of T4 into T3 by the liver may lead to hypothyroidism. The liver also breaks down hormones like adrenaline, aldosterone, estrogen, and insulin after they have performed their needed functions. The liver has many functions; keeping it healthy is a critical component in many health conditions, so next week I will talk about natural ways to help cleanse and keep the liver healthy.

This article is not intended as medical advice; visit your medical doctor for that. Please stop by our vitamin store and health-learning center. Until next time, I leave you with this message. You can develop and maintain vibrant health, abundant energy, and mental clarity. All you need is a little knowledge, will power, and determination, lots of patience, and the daily practice of good habits. Eat Well, Sleep Well, Be Well.

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