Healthy By Choice

...One Day at a Time

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Liver Health Awareness Month

Why is the liver important?

Your liver is a vital organ that performs many essential functions. It's the largest solid organ in the body and is located under your rib cage on the upper right side. It weighs about three pounds and is shaped like a football that is flat on one side.

Your liver processes everything you eat, drink, breathe, and absorb through your skin. It manufactures hormones, proteins, and enzymes your body uses to function and fight off disease. It turns nutrients into energy your body can use and removes harmful substances from your blood.

Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) affects up to 25 percent of people in the United States.

As its name suggests, NAFLD is the buildup of extra fat in the liver that isn't caused by alcohol. It's normal for the liver to contain some fat. But if more than 5 to 10 percent of the liver's weight is fat, then it is called a "fatty liver." NAFLD can cause fatigue and pain and lead to more serious inflammatory diseases of the liver.

Most often, NAFLD tends to develop in people who are overweight or obese or have diabetes, high cholesterol or high triglycerides. Sedentary behavior is another major contributing factor to the onset of NAFLD.

How can I maintain a healthy liver?

There are a number of things you can do to maintain the health of your liver. They include:

- eating a healthy diet
- limiting the amount of alcohol you drink
- correctly managing your medications
- avoiding inhaling or touching toxic substances

EAT FOR A HEALTHY LIVER

Do:

- Eat food with fiber. Fiber helps your liver work best. Fruits, vegetables, and grains have a lot of fiber.
- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Only eat shellfish that is fully cooked.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink. For most people, moderate drinking is no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 for men.

Do Not:

- Eat raw or undercooked shellfish.
- Eat a lot of foods high in fat, sugar, and salt.
- Eat a lot of fried foods including those from fast food restaurants.

Keep your liver healthy! Eat a healthy diet, exercise, and drink lots of water!

OCTOBER IS LIVER AWARENESS MONTH

Stay Liver Aware.

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Healthy Lung Month

Sometimes we take our lungs for granted. They keep us alive and well and for the most part, we don't need to think about them. Your body has a natural defense system designed to protect the lungs, keeping dirt and germs at bay. But there are some important things you can do to reduce your risk of lung disease and keep your lungs healthy.

Don't Smoke

Cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Cigarette smoke can narrow the air passages and make breathing more difficult. It causes chronic inflammation, or swelling in the lung, which can lead to chronic bronchitis. Over time cigarette smoke destroys lung tissue and may trigger changes that grow into cancer. If you smoke, it's never too late to benefit from quitting.

Avoid Exposure to Indoor Pollutants That Can Damage Your Lungs

Secondhand smoke, chemicals in the home and workplace, and radon all can cause or worsen lung disease. Make your home and car smoke free. Test your home for radon. Avoid exercising outdoors on bad air days.

Minimize Exposure to Outdoor Air Pollution

The air quality outside can vary from day to day and is sometimes unhealthy to breathe. Know how outdoor air pollution affects your health and develop useful strategies to minimize prolonged exposure. Climate change and natural disasters can also directly impact lung health.

Prevent Infection

A cold or other respiratory infection can sometimes become very serious. There are several things you can do to protect yourself:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Alcohol-based cleaners are a good substitute if you cannot wash.
- Avoids crowds during the cold and flu season.
- Good oral hygiene can protect you from the germs in your mouth leading to infections. Brush your teeth at least twice daily and see your dentist at least every six months.
- Get vaccinated every year against influenza. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if the pneumonia vaccine is right for you.
- If you get sick, keep it to yourself! Protect the people around you, including your loved ones, by keeping your distance. Stay home from work or school until you're feeling better.

Get Regular Healthcare

Regular check-ups help prevent diseases, even when you are feeling well. This is especially true for lung disease, which sometimes goes undetected until it is serious. During a check-up, your healthcare provider will listen to your breathing and listen to your concerns.

Exercise

Whether you are young or old, slender or large, able-bodied or living with a chronic illness or disability, being physically active can help keep your lungs healthy.

Live Well! Breathe Well!