

The Love Language of the Liver

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The Love Language of the Liver

The importance of supporting our liver with the right forms of energy it needs cannot be understated. The liver is an extraordinary organ that provides over 500 vital functions to help us feel great and operate with focus and clarity in our day-to-day activities. It provides a steady supply of energy while accomplishing these tasks, along with the vital restoration and detoxification we need to maintain overall health and wellness.

The liver has many roles in our overall health, including detoxifying and removing toxins and waste products from the bloodstream, managing blood clotting and removing excess bilirubin, supporting blood sugar levels, and producing and regulating cholesterol by creating bile. The bile produced by the liver also aids in the breakdown of fats and the absorption of fat-soluble nutrients from our foods. The liver also stores essential nutrients, like vitamins A, D, E, K, B12, and the minerals copper and iron, which are released when they are needed in the body. The liver regulates amino acids in the bloodstream, and it plays a vital role in the production of albumin, which transports hormones, enzymes, and essential nutrients to where they are needed in the body.

What are the signs of our liver not functioning optimally?

With the liver at the seat of many vital body functions, its health should be a primary concern. A congested liver can cause a feeling of heavy sluggishness, and we may even experience abdominal weight gain along with associated lymph congestion and poor circulation. The ability to think clearly with a sharp memory and quick recall may also diminish if our liver is not functioning optimally. Digestion can also be impacted as a sluggish liver does not effectively produce bile, which is needed to break down fats, resulting in gastrointestinal distress.





Being quick to anger or not able to let go of anger can also be indicative of liver weakness since the emotions of anger, rage, and resentment are associated with the liver. Other potential signs of liver imbalance are chronic fatigue, frequent headaches, irregular menstruation, and anemia.

The Horary Cycle in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) charts the flow of energy through our organ systems and the hours when each organ is at its peak function. The hours of 1:00 to 3:00 a.m. are prime time for the liver to focus its energy on the detoxification process and rebuilding of blood. If you're not sleeping deeply between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. and instead tend to wake up when the liver is most energetically active, not only may you be holding onto excessive emotional anger or resentment, but it may indicate a physiological imbalance to support.

TCM uses other known markers of liver distress found on the face and tongue to help identify if the liver needs support. Vertical creases and skin discoloration between the eyebrows and thick, dark, distended veins under the tongue are both possible signs of liver imbalance.

What steps can be taken to ensure that we have a healthy liver?

The good news is that the liver has an incredible ability to regenerate itself. Even if the liver has been damaged from the intake of toxic substances, such as prescription drugs and alcohol, processed foods, smoking, and breathing in toxins from environmental air pollution, we can take steps to support it with healthy lifestyle choices. With support, the liver can better recover, regenerate, and rejuvenate the body with energy, clarity, and overall wellness.

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The Liver's Love Language

The way to show your liver the love it deserves is with well-rounded nourishment through lifestyle choices that encourage our overall well-being and build a solid foundation for optimal health. The liver thrives with adequate hydration (drinking half our body weight in fluid ounces of pure, clean water) and getting enough quality sleep each night, roughly 7-9 hours, depending on the individual. Regular sunlight exposure to boost the body's natural vitamin D production is also a great way to show your liver some love, as Vitamin D plays an integral role in liver functions. Additionally, we should focus on breathing fresh air, practicing deep breathing, and exercising to our ability to move lymph, increase blood circulation, and raise the body temperature to induce sweating, all of which support the body's essential detoxification process.

Another important lifestyle choice for liver function is maintaining or restoring our mental and emotional health. Take time for reflection and experience enjoyment, recreation, and communion with family, friends, and God our creator to regain faith, hope, a sense of abundance and joy, and a willingness to forgive.

The liver's love language includes a whole-food diet that limits or eliminates the intake of processed foods, refined sugars and carbohydrates, gluten, dairy, vegetable oils, and alcohol. Foods that specifically nourish and support the liver's function are important to incorporate into the diet, such as lemon and citrus fruits, cruciferous vegetables, healthy fats, beets, and herbs that reduce inflammation and support digestion and the detoxification pathways.

Show your liver some extra love by including these healthy foods in your diet:

1. Lemon and Grapefruit

Lemon is a true liver tonic. It stimulates the liver to flush out toxins with its high vitamin C and antioxidant content as well as other beneficial compounds, including flavonoids like hesperidin and eriocitrin, that have been shown to reduce liver oxidative stress.



Science has also shown that the flavonoid naringin found in both lemon and grapefruit, along with the flavonoid naringenin in grapefruit, appear to reduce inflammation and protect cells with antifibrinogenic and hepatoprotective effects and promote the liver's antioxidant defense system.

2. Cruciferous Vegetables

Vegetables such as Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, mustard, radish, and watercress are cruciferous vegetables with unique sulfur-containing compounds called glucosinolates. These compounds promote liver detoxification by inhibiting Phase I Liver detoxification cytochrome P-450 enzymes while also activating Liver Phase II Glucuronidation detoxification enzymes and upregulating sulfation and glutathione detoxification pathways, all of which support the elimination of toxins from the body.

3. Healthy Fats

Foods that contain fatty acids shown to support liver function are avocados and walnuts, which are also high in antioxidants. Foods such as oily fish high in Omega 3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, like salmon and sardines, and extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) with high levels of oleic acid and other monounsaturated fatty acids and phenolic compounds, like hydroxytyrosol and oleuropein, are very beneficial for the liver.

The omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids from fish have been shown to reduce lipid accumulation and liver enzyme levels and are anti-inflammatory. Additionally, they can improve insulin sensitivity. EVOO's monounsaturated fatty acids can play a role in the prevention or recovery from liver damage. It achieves this by supporting the activation of hepatocyte signaling pathways, which can prevent insulin resistance and inflammation, endoplasmic reticulum stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and oxidative stress.

4. Beets

Red beetroot is a rich source of betaxanthins and betacyanin, phytochemicals that are anti-inflammatory and offer substantial antioxidant activity that purifies the blood and supports liver detoxification. Beetroot juice has also been shown to significantly reduce hepatic steatosis, which is the infiltration of liver cells with fat.

5. Herbs

Liver protective herbs that are anti-inflammatory and offer antioxidant support are wonderful considerations for supplemental support for the liver. Milk thistle and turmeric are two common herbs used for liver protective support. Though milk thistle has long been known and used for liver support by ancient cultures and physicians, recent scientific research shows that it may protect the liver by multiple means. For example, it may block toxins at the membrane level, enhance protein synthesis, offer antioxidant and antifibrotic activity, and provide anti-inflammatory or immunomodulating support. The curcumin in turmeric exerts remarkable liver protective and therapeutic support through antioxidant activity and suppression of proinflammatory cytokines.

Bitter herbs that stimulate digestion and aid liver detoxification are another great choice. There is a wide range of bitter herbs, with each herb having its own unique properties and offerings of support for digestion, liver detoxification, and other benefits. Bitter herbs such as gentian, dandelion root, wormwood, and yellow dock are considered cholagogues, which help stimulate bile flow. Other bitter herbs that support digestion and aid liver congestion are mugwort, barberry, chamomile, and agrimony, to name a few. Learning more about these herbs and their specific benefits can help you target your particular needs with the most comprehensive and focused support, not only for your liver's function but also to balance multiple body systems.

If you want to learn more about herbs, consider enrolling in our Certified Master Herbalist program. This 16-week program discusses native herbs and herbs you should grow, plants and herbs as food, and nutritional qualities and physical attributes of herbs. To speak with an Enrollment Specialist, call 800-428-0408, option 2, or visit our website at trinityschool.org/program/cmh to learn more.



This health article was written by Trinity Instructor and Enrollment Specialist Anya Connolly, MS, CHHP, CTN.

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