

# 50 Ways to Love Your Liver

(copied from American Liver Foundation)

1. Avoid taking unnecessary medications (Too many chemicals can harm me).
2. Don't mix medicines without the advice of a doctor. (You could create something poisonous that could damage me badly)
3. Street drugs cause serious damage and scar me permanently.
4. Don't drown me in beer, liquor or wine. (If you drink alcohol, have two or fewer drinks per day) .
5. Never mix alcohol with other drugs & medications.
6. Be careful when using aerosol cleaners. I have to detoxify what you breathe in, so when you go on a cleaning binge, make sure the room is well ventilated, or wear a mask.
7. Bug sprays, paint sprays and all those other chemical sprays you use can harm me too. Be careful what you breathe.
8. Watch what gets on your skin! (Those insecticides you put on trees and shrubs to kill bugs can get to me right through your skin and destroy some cells.) Remember, they're serious chemicals.

## **Hepatitis B & C - contagious viral infections that cause chronic liver disease**

9. Use caution and common sense regarding intimate contact (Hepatitis viruses live in body fluids, including blood and seminal fluid).
10. The hepatitis B virus also lives in saliva and, unlike the AIDS virus, can be transmitted through this fluid with relative ease.

*If you were stuck with a needle used by a person with AIDS, you'd have a one in 2,000 chance of picking up the AIDS virus. But if that person had hepatitis B, your chances of picking up the virus increase to one in four!*

11. Hepatitis C, spread primarily through direct blood contact, can be transmitted through contaminated needles used in tattooing, body piercing, or IV drug injection.
12. Untreated, chronic hepatitis B and C can cause cirrhosis and liver cancer and is the most frequent reason for liver transplants.
13. Many infected people do not have symptoms until liver damage occurs, sometimes many years later.
14. Teach your children what a syringe looks like and tell them to leave it alone.

15. Never, ever, touch a discarded syringe or needle.

### **An insidious Disease**

Over 5 million Americans have hepatitis B or C, resulting in an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 deaths annually. Yet many people do not know they are infected until serious liver damage occurs because they have few, if any, symptoms. Who's at greater risk of contracting hepatitis B or C? How do you find out if you're a carrier? Here are the answers.

16. If you or your family has immigrated from Africa, Southeast Asia, Mediterranean countries, or the Caribbean, where hepatitis B affects up to 15% of the population, you should have a blood test to determine if you are a carrier. Your doctor can arrange this for you.

17. If you received a blood transfusion prior to 1990, you may have hepatitis C. As many as 300,000 people may have been infected in this way before the test for hepatitis C was developed.

18. If anyone in your family or a sexual partner tests positive for the hepatitis B virus, ask your doctor to test you for the virus. If the test is negative, your doctor will vaccinate you against the virus. A simple series of three vaccinations over six months will protect you against the virus for many years.

### **Who else should be tested for hepatitis B and C?**

19. Users of intravenous drugs, particularly those who share their needles.

20. Men or women who have multiple sexual partners.

21. Health care (including ambulance) workers.

22. Staff of institutions for people with developmental disabilities.

23. Firefighters, police officers, mortuary attendants or daycare workers.

### **If you test positive for hepatitis B or C...**

24. Consult your doctor. He or she will determine whether you have liver disease and if you need referral to a specialist.

25. If you have hepatitis B, have your family tested. Those who have never contracted hepatitis B should be vaccinated.

26. Ask your doctor to screen for liver cancer in order to detect tumors while they are still small and treatable.

27. If you are a pregnant, hepatitis B-infected mother, you can pass the infection to your infants around the time of birth. More than 90% of this form of transmission can be prevented by

vaccination of the baby.

### **Eat for health**

Since everything we eat must pass through the liver, special attention to nutrition and diet can help keep me healthy. Here are some tips on eating for health healthy liver, healthy you!

28. Eat a well balanced, nutritionally adequate diet. if you enjoy foods from each of the four food groups, you will probably obtain the nutrients you need.

29. Cut down on the amount of deep-fried and fatty foods you and your family consume. Doctors believe that the risk of gallbladder disorders (including gallstones, a liver-related disease) can be reduced by avoiding high-fat and cholesterol foods.

30. Minimize your consumption of smoked, cured and salted foods. Taste your food before adding salt! Or try alternative seasonings in your cooking such as lemon juice, onion, vinegar, garlic, pepper, mustard, cloves, sage or thyme.

### **MEAT, FISH, POULTRY & ALTERNATIVES PROVIDE:**

protein, vitamin A, iron, vitamin B12, niacin, fiber, thiamin

### **BREADS AND CEREALS PROVIDE:**

carbohydrates, niacin, thiamin, iron, riboflavin, fiber

### **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES PROVIDE:**

vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, fiber, folacin

### **MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS PROVIDE:**

calcium, riboflavin, niacin,folacin, vitamin A, vitamin B12, vitamin D

31. Increase your intake of high-fiber foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, rice and cereals. A high-fiber diet is especially helpful in keeping me healthy.

32. Rich desserts, snacks and drinks are high in calories because of the amount of sweetening (and often fat) they contain. Why not munch on some fruit instead?

33. Keep your weight close to ideal. Medical researchers have established a direct correlation between obesity and the development of gallbladder disorders.

34. If you are dieting to lose weight, make sure that you are still getting all the vitamins and minerals your body - and I! - need to function properly

35. A regular exercise routine, two or three days a week, will help keep me healthy, too.

### **TROUBLE SIGNS...**

Here are some signs of liver trouble. If you experience anyof these symptoms, please contact

your doctor:

36. Yellow discoloration of the skin or eyes.
37. Abdominal swelling or severe abdominal pain.
38. Prolonged itching of the skin.
39. Very dark urine or pale stools-, or the passage of bloody or tar-like stools.
40. Chronic fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite.

### **What to do if you have liver disease...**

41. Follow your doctor's advice on food, exercise and other lifestyle guidelines. Learn about liver disease and understand how your diet helps you. Learn what and how much you can eat and drink.
42. Contact the American Liver Foundation for a listing of chapters near you. join the chapter - talking to other people who are also affected by liver disease will help.
43. Invite family and close friends to attend chapter meetings or any learning sessions your local chapter may hold.

### **The limitations of transplants...**

While transplants are not the answer for eliminating liver disease (We need to find cures!), transplants are the only hope for survival many liver disease patients have. But there just are not enough organ donors to meet the demand.

44. Consider donating your organs in the event of your death. You can sign the organ donor card on your driver's license if your state has such a program or obtain an organ donor card from the American Liver Foundation. Be sure to discuss your wishes with your family and your family doctor.

### **AMERICAN LIVER FOUNDATION**

Your contribution to the American Liver Foundation will enable us to:

- provide financial support for medical research in liver disease and liver function;
- provide educational programs for the medical profession, patients and the general public;
- and provide support groups for patients and families affected by liver diseases.

## **HELP US CONTINUE THIS IMPORTANT WORK**

45. Support the American Liver Foundation with a tax-deductible donation. Whatever you can afford to give, \$15, \$25, or \$50, would be greatly appreciated.

46. Consider leaving a gift to the American Liver Foundation in your will. Contact our national office for a free pamphlet on our planned giving program.

47. You may also wish to name the American Liver Foundation as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy. Contact our office for more information on this as well.

48. If you can spare just a few hours a week, consider becoming a volunteer for the American Liver Foundation. Our office can tell you about all the ways in which your time can help us.

## **AND FINALLY...**

49. See your doctor for a check-up on a regular basis. Remember, prevention is always the best medicine.

50. Take care of yourself in everything you do. Be a healthy "live"r - keep a healthy liver.

*The information contained in this sheet is provided for information only. This information does not constitute medical advice and it should not be relied upon as such. The American Liver Foundation (ALF) does not engage in the practice of medicine. ALF, under no circumstances, recommends particular treatments for specific individuals, and in all cases recommends that you consult your physician before pursuing any course of treatment.*