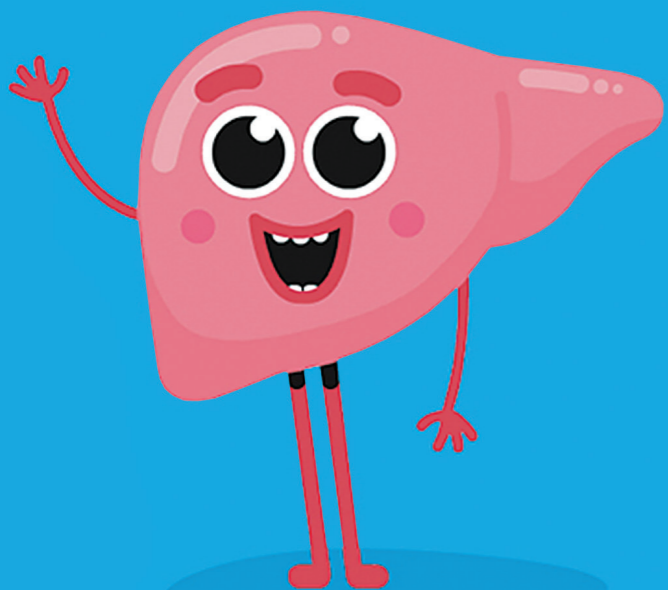


Your liver, your health



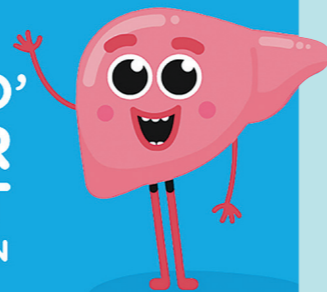
LiverWELL

Why your liver is important

Just about everything you eat and everything you drink goes through your liver. Even chemicals that touch your skin and toxins that you breathe in pass through your liver.

Your liver has around 500 different jobs that keep your body working at its best. The two most important jobs are cleaning your blood and helping with digestion. A healthy liver also helps with energy, fights infection, and gets rid of harmful toxins. But a damaged liver can't do these jobs properly. So it's vital to keep your liver healthy.

SAY 'HELLO'
TO YOUR
HARDEST
WORKING ORGAN



Liver facts

- largest internal organ
- on the right-hand side of your torso, behind your ribs
- can repair itself and create new healthy liver tissue
- is the key to breaking down and absorbing fats in the body
- 1.5 litres of blood flows through your liver every minute

Liver disease can affect anyone

There are over 100 liver diseases and they can affect anyone, adults and children. Those at risk of liver damage include people who:

- are overweight or obese and have a fatty liver
- drink too much alcohol
- have a liver infection, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C, that has not been diagnosed and is not treated
- have a problem with their immune system that leads to liver disease
- are born with liver disease.

What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis is the term for an inflamed (swollen) liver. Liver inflammation is usually caused by viral hepatitis or fatty liver.

Treatment works

After one month on new drugs, I'm already seeing an improvement. My liver is the healthiest it's ever been.

~ Sally, 39 years old

Looking out for symptoms

A damaged liver can continue functioning over a long period without showing specific symptoms or signs of damage. In fact, some symptoms of liver disease can go unnoticed because they look like general ailments. To stay on the safe side, talk to your doctor if you are concerned about any of the following symptoms:

- feeling unwell and tired all the time
- tenderness or pain in the liver area
- itchiness over the whole body, especially at night
- swelling of the ankles
- jaundice (yellow skin and eyes)
- unusual or persistent darkening of the urine
- brain fog or feeling a bit vague.

Get your liver checked

The earlier you treat liver damage the better your chance of improving your liver health. Ask your doctor to check your liver if you are concerned.

What is a liver check?

A liver check is usually done with blood tests that measure how well your liver is working. Results help your doctor choose other tests to run. These tests include:

- **ultrasound:** builds a digital picture of your liver
- **fibroscan:** a specialised ultrasound that measures any scarring on your liver.

These tests don't hurt and the cost is covered by Medicare.

Practical tips for staying safe

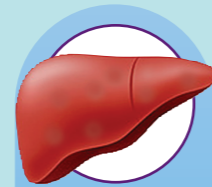
- **Manage your medications.** Avoid mixing painkillers and sedative drugs with other medications. High doses taken together can harm your liver.
- **Limit alcohol.** Try to cut back and only drink the recommended quantity for your body size.
- **Avoid smoking tobacco or marijuana or other drugs.** The toxins harm your liver.
- **Take care with drug use and injecting.** Use only clean syringes and, if possible, go to a supervised injection room.
- **Be careful with tattoos and body piercing.** Choose a studio that has accredited safety standards and uses sterilised needles and inks.
- **Practise safe sex.** Use condoms during vaginal, oral and anal sex. This will protect you from getting a viral infection via sexual fluids or via blood.
- **Practice good personal hygiene.** Do not share items that might have traces of blood (toothbrush, razor) and put used bandages in sealed bags.
- **Travel plans.** Some countries have a high risk of hepatitis A and B, malaria and yellow fever. Talk to your doctor about vaccinations, and use bottled or boiled water during your trip.

Alcohol puts stress on your liver

Try to limit how much alcohol you drink, or take a break from drinking for 3-4 days, or try to stop altogether. If you have any form of liver disease, this is essential for your health. For more information and guidelines go to: www.liverwell.org.au/drinkaware

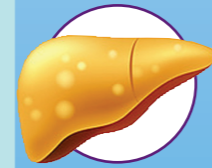
Stages of liver disease

There are many different types of liver disease. But no matter what type you have, the damage to your liver progresses in a similar way. The good news is that if liver disease is caught early, treatment can be very effective. But if left untreated, your liver will get worse.



Inflammation

An inflamed (swollen) liver is caused by viral infection, too much alcohol, problems with your immune system or toxins. Treatment can help the inflammation go away.



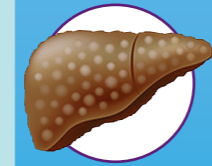
Fibrosis

If an inflamed liver is not treated, the healthy soft tissue will begin to scar and harden. With treatment the fibrosis (scarring) can heal.



Cirrhosis

A liver with cirrhosis is full of hard scarred tissue. Treatment can stop the condition from getting worse, protect any healthy tissue, and sometimes even improve liver function.



Liver cancer

The risk of liver cancer is higher if you have an existing liver disease such as cirrhosis. Cancer can be managed if found early.



Liver failure

Liver failure is when the liver stops functioning. This is a very serious condition that needs urgent medical care. A liver transplant might be an option.

Talking about your concerns

If you are concerned, talk to your doctor who can run tests to measure how your liver is working. If you need treatment, your doctor will prescribe medication to help your liver and will monitor your progress. Medicare covers the cost of most treatment so medication is not expensive. Ask your doctor if you are eligible for this help.

Your doctor can also refer you to liver specialists. An up-to-date directory on liver clinics and liver specialists is listed on the Hepatitis Victoria website.

Try talking to friends and family for practical and emotional support. You can also talk to health providers – including nurses, counsellors, therapists, pharmacists, dieticians and nutritionists. For general information and support you can also call the Hepatitis Victoria Infoline: 1800 703 003.

Support makes a big difference

You can feel isolated and treatment can make you feel tired and vulnerable so emotional support is excellent.

~ Grenville, 56 years old

Health workers make a difference

It's in their attitude. If I have an illness, I want to go and be heard and be understood.

~James, 56 years old

Hepatitis Infoline

Free and anonymous. Trained professionals listen to your concerns and provide further information. Call **1800 703 003**

Keeping your liver healthy

The LiverWELL app developed by Hepatitis Victoria has lots of tips on how to keep your liver healthy:



eating well: cut back on foods that are high in fat and high in sugar



getting active: do some exercise everyday



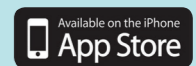
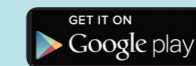
feeling well: take care of yourself emotionally, spiritually and physically



drink aware: cut back on how much alcohol you drink or try to stop altogether

For information and practical tips on managing your liver health, visit: www.liverwell.org.au or download the **liverWELL app**

LiverWELL



Finding support

Websites

www.liverwell.org.au

www.loveyourliver.com.au

www.quit.org.au

www.hepvic.org.au

www.cancervic.org.au

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

HEPATITIS VICTORIA

www.hepvic.org.au

info@hepvic.org.au

Hepatitis Infoline: 1800 703 003

Produced by Hepatitis Victoria. This information is general in nature and not intended as medical advice. Consult your doctor for further information.