

# Supporting the Liver



The liver isn't the most talked about of organs, but the number of known functions it has in the body is incredible – we're talking in the 100s here! You don't have to have had a toxic lifestyle for your liver to become overburdened. Just living in a modern environment is enough to put stress on the liver over the years. Almost everyone could do with taking more care of this incredible organ. The liver is situated in the

abdominal cavity, just below the diaphragm. It's the largest gland in the body. Here are some of its key jobs:

**Supports digestion** – produces bile, which is needed for breaking down fats so that they can be absorbed and used by the body. When carbohydrates, proteins and fats are absorbed by the body they are transported to the liver for further processing.

**Supports healthy metabolism** - the process by which the body turns what we eat and drink into energy it can use. The liver is particularly involved in fat and carbohydrate metabolism and maintaining stable blood sugars.

**Detoxification** – this is what most people associate with the liver, because the liver is involved in filtering our blood and either removing toxins from the body or storing them. Basically, the liver takes toxins and turns them into less poisonous substances via its many detoxification pathways. These include external toxins and internal toxins. These pathways are often completely overloaded with the number of toxic chemicals we bombard our bodies with, be this foods, environmental toxins as well as stress, which creates yet more work for the liver.

**Storage** – as well as storing toxins, the liver also stores vitamin A, D, K, B12 and iron.

**Fights infection** - as the blood is filtered through the liver, numerous white blood cells kill harmful bacteria. The liver also releases many different chemicals into the body to help the immune system fight off infection.

**Hormone balance** – the liver is vital for hormone regulation via a number of complex pathways.

Hopefully you can see from this just how crucial the liver is for our health. Whilst some people go on crazy liver detoxes, you don't need to do this. In fact, these can be far too severe for the body. The liver is always detoxing, so it's more a case of giving it what it needs to help this process along. When you do this consistently over time then it will make a difference.

## *Start the morning lightly!*

Your liver is most active at night, around 3-4am. As you are still sleeping (hopefully!), the liver can crack on and catch up with cleaning house. Eating a fat heavy breakfast early in the day puts the liver into digestion mode. If you can hold off on the fats for a little while this can be helpful. There are things you can have that actively support the liver too and work well in the morning.

**Lemon water on waking** – lemons are one of the best foods for the liver and if you start your day with a whole lemon squeezed into a large glass of cold/room temperature water then this is a fantastic way to support the liver with its cleansing processes. You could also try having lemon water before you go to bed.

**Juicing** - if you have a juicer then this is a perfect time to use it. Cucumber juice or even celery juice if you don't mind the flavour, are both fantastic. You can always make these the night before and keep them in a jar so that they are ready for the morning. Wait at least 20 minutes after your lemon water before you have any juice. If cucumber and celery aren't for you, then try the liver support juice (recipe below).



**Liver support smoothie** - if it's too much to have this in the morning, or it doesn't fit with your routine, then you could try this in the afternoon or evening. See recipe below.

## *Liver supporting foods*

As well as the above, see if you can increase the number of fruit and vegetables that are particularly helpful for liver detoxification:

- **Brassica vegetables** - these vegetables contain sulphur compounds that are incredibly supportive of the detoxification pathways. Brassica vegetables, also called cruciferous vegetables, include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, spring greens, radish, rocket, watercress, kohlrabi, bok choy, Swiss chard and wasabi.
- **Bitters** - think bitter bile! All bitter foods support the liver. These include the cruciferous vegetables above as well as cranberries, lemons, Jerusalem artichoke, chicory, aubergine, spinach, nettles and dandelion leaves. If you have access to nettles and dandelions, making fresh teas out of these is fantastically healthy! It's amazing how we've labelled such healthy plants as weeds. There's a reason they grow everywhere, they have incredible resilience which is what supports us when we consume these amazing greens.
- **Others** – apples and dates are both wonderful for providing the body with healthy glucose that it can store as glycogen. This helps prevent cravings for other sweet options.

### **Useful tips:**

- Have a bowl of rocket leaves with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and lemon juice before a meal stimulates the liver's digestive role. Plus it's a way to get even more veggies in!
- Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! This is especially important if you are doing the various juices and detoxification smoothies, because getting enough fluids will help your body flush the toxins out.
- Reduce household toxins. Of course there are also toxins in food, but at this stage I would suggest focusing on what to include rather than thinking about what to exclude. However, when it comes to other toxins in our lives, then I would definitely suggest using natural products wherever possible. Whether this is for cleaning the house or things you put on your skin.

### **Liver Support Juice**

*1 apple  
1 celery stalk  
½-1 inch root ginger  
1 lemon or lime, peeled*

### **Liver Support Teas**

*Sliced lemon  
Sliced ginger  
1 tsp honey  
**or**  
Fresh dandelion or nettle leaves  
A dash of lemon or honey if you prefer  
steep for a few minutes in hot water*



### **Liver Support Smoothie**

*1 small banana – if you chop and freeze it first it makes the smoothie nice and cold  
1 large slice of pineapple – chopped (have enough to make the smoothie taste nice!)  
1 inch courgette/zucchini  
1 inch cucumber  
Some chopped parsley  
small handful baby leaf spinach  
splash of coconut water topped up with cold water*

*Blend all ingredients in smoothie blender such as a Nutri bullet. If you have any green powders, such as spirulina, moringa, barley grass or wheatgrass then you could also add a teaspoon of this.*