

**Your liver is a vital organ. Take care of your liver by taking care of your health!**

- Do not mix alcohol and over the counter or prescription medicines.
- Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise.
- Avoid breathing chemicals.
- Wash your hand thoroughly.

- If you drink, drink in moderation.
- Manage your medications! Take only as prescribed.
- Avoid exposure to someone else's bodily fluids.
- Avoid contaminated food and water.

Discuss getting vaccinated for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B with your medical provider.

## Green Flags — All Clear

## What this means...

**If you:**

- Follow a healthy diet
- Get regular physical activity.
- Take medicines as directed by your health care provider.
- Practice good health habits, including hand washing.

- Good work!

**Keep up the great work!**

## Yellow Flags — Caution

## What this means...

**If you have any of the following:**

- Yellow color to your skin
- Abdominal pain, or swelling in your abdomen
- Dark urine
- Itchy skin
- Whites of your eyes appear yellow
- Feel tired all the time
- Feel nauseated or lose your appetite
- Bruise easily
- New or worsening confusion

- You are at higher risk of having non- alcoholic fatty liver
- You may have liver disease or your liver disease is getting worse

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

## Red Flags—Stop and Think

## What this means...

**If you**

- Severe shortness of breath
- Weight gain
- Persisting fever, vomiting, and abdominal pain
- Have stool that is plate, tar-colored, or bloody
- New onset or worsening confusion

You need to be evaluated by a healthcare professional immediately.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **Call 9-1-1.**

**If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!**

## Liver Fast Facts

- Two of the best known functions of the liver are fat burning and detoxification.
- Your liver plays a major part in whether you have a fast or slow metabolism.
- The liver is the only organ in the body that can easily replace damaged cells, but if many cells are lost, the liver may not be able to meet the needs of the body.
- The liver can be considered a factory. Its many functions include:
  - Making bile, which is needed for the digestion of food, particularly fats.
  - Storing the extra glucose or sugar in the body so that it can be converted into glucose when the body needs it for energy.
  - Producing material that helps your blood clot.
  - Producing amino acids (the building blocks of making proteins), including those that help fight infections.
  - Processing and storage of iron necessary for red blood cell production.
  - Manufacturing and regulation of cholesterol and other chemicals required for fat transport.
  - Converting of waste products of body metabolism into a substance that the body excretes in the urine and stool.
  - Metabolizing medications into their active ingredient in the body and filtering out excess bacteria from the blood.
- **Blood testing is important!** Your medical provider may order blood tests to test your liver functioning and blood clotting test. The tests in conjunction with other tests and exams can properly diagnose your condition. Several of these tests can be thrown off by other factors, so be patient with your doctor as they go through the test results and figure out exactly what the best diagnosis and treatment options will be.

Some common causes of liver injury/damage include:

- **Hepatitis A** is a viral infection, primary spread through unclean hands. It is transmitted through the fecal-oral route. A vaccine can prevent this infection. Thorough hand-washing, particularly when preparing food is important.
- **Hepatitis B** is a viral infection transmitted by those who are infected to those that are not immune. It can be spread most commonly by exposure to body fluids (contaminated needles, contaminated blood), mother to child, and by sexual contact. It can cause an acute infection but can also progress to cause chronic inflammation that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. The Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent infection (chronic hepatitis).
- **Hepatitis C** is transmitted by exposure to the blood of someone with Hepatitis C. It is spread most commonly through contaminated injection, used drug paraphernalia, blood transfusions, breaches in infection control protocols, and blood exposure during sexual contact.
- Alcohol is the leading cause of liver disease in North America. Anyone drinking more than three to five drinks per day is at serious risk of developing alcoholic liver disease. Even if you feel fine, you could have the disease; it just has not yet been detected. Once symptoms occur, generally the liver has already been damaged.

### What can you do?

Remember! Everything you eat or drink, including medicines passes through your liver. Your liver is a vital organ. Take care of your liver by taking care of your health.

## Southeast Washington Aging and Long Term Care

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