



Leverage the liver with a healthy diet

GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

At 1,500gms, the liver is the largest internal body organ responsible for most chemical processes and metabolic functions. It receives one-and-a-half litres of blood from the intestines per minute. Most nutrients, toxins, medicines and any other substance must pass through the liver before distribution.

A litre of bile from the liver is poured into the gallbladder daily.

Did you know that the liver is the only part of the body that can regenerate? Most doctors do and although it cannot be replaced, it has the capacity to replace itself in case of an accident. The damage must of course be on a replaceable portion since a ruptured gallbladder is irreplaceable.

The organ detoxifies the body and, as the biggest gland, the need for good food and balanced diet to keep it in optimal condition cannot be overemphasised. You have a responsibility to yourself to prevent any possible disorders to the liver.

The liver transforms nutrients into other nutrients; produces bile that aids digestion of fats and cleanses blood by neutralising and eliminating foreign toxic substances.

Anything that favours secretion of the bile from liver cells to the gallbladder decongests it and enhances its function. Such a substance is said to have choleric properties. Some plant substances stimulate regeneration of liver cells when they are damaged by several causes such as viruses, medicines, toxic substances and beer.

In liver disease such as cirrhosis of the liver, fluid can accumulate in the abdomen (ascites).

An imbalanced diet that has plenty of protein (from meat) and alcoholic beverages can strain the liver, thus disturbing its health.

Drugs taken during an illness have to be degraded to facilitate their elimination from the body. The process of detoxifying these external compounds is a series of complex reactions in the liver. Any liver damage will imply that these complex processes are slowed down, meaning the drugs stay longer in the body than expected.

This may lead to the accumulation of a harmless drug, which can produce fatal or lifelong defects in the body. Therefore, one has to deliberately care for this vital organ and maintain it in good condition at all times. What then detoxifies the liver? Food and water.

Artichoke is a food item gaining popularity for its ability to cleanse the liver. In fact, it is an authentic medicine for the liver. It contains cynarin, which strengthens liver cells. It is good for those on long-term medication, for example women on oral

contraceptives (the pill), whose oestrogen need to be metabolised and excreted by the liver.

The production of bile juice is one of the core functions of the liver. The gallbladder stores bile produced by the liver and empties its contents into the intestines.

Whole cereals and legumes help prevent development of gallstones, which are the most common disorders of this organ. Those who have undergone gallbladder surgery would benefit from a menu composed of:

Breakfast – sweet cassava, salad, whole bread toast with *tahini* and wheat germ.

Lunch – sweet cassava, salad with potato stew with stuffed artichokes and whole bread with a refreshing tea.

Dinner – onion, watercress and carrot salad and cardoons in onions sauce.

In case of liver disease the menu below is recommended.

Breakfast – grape juice with cherries and loquats with boiled *tapioca* and almond or coconut milk sweetened with honey.

Lunch – Riviera salad (composed of spinach, lemon and basic herbs in olive oil and watercress) with rice and artichokes and onion pizza with whole bread and shredded apple with yoghurt.

Supper – grilled vegetables with shredded apple with yoghurt.

The diets may sound complex but they are worth a try. Forcing the liver to work with limited amount of fluid is tantamount to washing dishes in a glass of water. Drink enough of this stuff. After all it is life. Water has no preservatives, no additives or irritants and it's perfect, nay, magic.

It rinses the stomach and prepares it for work. Take water an hour before a meal, not after. This should be supplemented by physical exercise. Onions stimulate the metabolic functions, thus reducing liver congestion. When taken fresh and as juice berries, strawberry and radish reduce liver toxicity and regenerate hepatic cells.

Grapes are important for all digestive organs and supply sugars and other high value nutrients. Avoid foods with substances that need neutralising by the liver, such as pesticides, chemical additives and where possible chemical-based medications.

Spices are not good for patients with liver problems as they overload it. Liver diseases require one to restrict the intake of alcohol and fats. Salt and proteins should also be reduced. Fruits should be copiously taken by those who want a functional and efficient liver. However, oranges and citrus fruits consumed on an empty stomach can provoke sudden emptying of the gallbladder with a feeling of nausea and abdominal heaviness.

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