Chapter 7

The Liver Type

Taken from Dr. Berg’s book, The 7 Principles of Fat Burning

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The Liver

The liver is the body’s filtration system. It is a major organ for detoxification; it works to break down the chemicals taken in from toxins on foods to which you are exposed daily. The liver filters out microbes, drugs and dead cells from the body as an immune function. Every hormone, chemical, bacteria, virus, fungus and parasite is filtered through the liver. It is similar to an oil filter in your car. In addition, it acts as a digestive organ, breaking down fats, proteins and even carbohydrates. The liver can also make sugar out of protein. It uses sulfur to break down toxic chemicals into harmless ones. Eggs, cruciferous vegetables (e.g., broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and kale), raw garlic and onions are rich sources of sulfur.

Cruciferous vegetables have some unique properties, including being anti-estrogenic and anti-carcinogenic (anti-cancer causing); and since many hormone problems stem from excessive estrogen and toxins, it would be wise to eat as many of these vegetables as possible. In fact, they are the central food for a Liver type.

The liver has over five hundred known functions and every fat-burning hormone works through the liver. This is why our program starts with the Liver Enhancement Plan.
When the liver gets damaged over the years, toxins that are normally filtered out can recirculate through the body, re-exposing delicate glands to harmful compounds, triggering a toxic overload. Synthetic estrogen from growth hormones, medications, aspirin, birth control pills and HRT (hormone replacement therapy) also causes huge side effects of damage to the liver.

Below is a description of what happens when the liver does not function properly.

**THE LIVER TYPE**
When damaged, the liver causes a potbelly appearance. This protruding abdomen is not fat, it is water. This characteristic is called ascites, which comes from the Greek askos, meaning bladder, belly or wineskin (animal skin used to hold wine).
Fluid in abdomen: ascites

When the liver is not functioning well it can leak fluid into the stomach area within the abdomen. If you push the stomach from side to side, it looks and feels like a water balloon. An ultrasound is the best way to confirm fluid in the abdomen.

Have you ever seen the skinny guy with a potbelly on the beach wearing a Speedo? Sorry for the image. One female patient told me, “Yes, I think I’ve seen this person before . . . every night before I go to bed!” That is ascites—water weight in the abdomen. There is a sac inside the abdomen area that fills up as the improperly working liver leaks liquid. The fluid is leaking because the liver is not able to produce proteins—it’s a low-protein situation that can’t be fixed by eating more protein. You can only improve this by eating high-quality proteins and lots of vegetables that take the stress off the liver and let it heal. This has also been called a “beer gut,” which creates the same stomach because alcohol destroys the liver. If you happen to have excess weight in the midsection, a glass of wine or beer at night will just make things worse.

The pictures below show the changes from a normal body shape through the progressive stages of the Liver type.
Liver types usually have a dull pressure and fullness in the upper abdomen just under the right rib cage. Some of these people get tired for a while after each meal. When they lie on their left side at night, it becomes uncomfortable due to a swelling of the liver, which pushes into the diaphragm, cutting down the expansion of breathing. Lying on the right side seems to be the most comfortable. They are sensitive to a whole range of foods, especially fatty foods and refined grains, and must eliminate grains altogether or suffer the consequences of bloating, gas and indigestion.

There is a tight, almost arthritic-like feeling in the lower back, particularly in the morning. There is also a tightness or pain in the right shoulder or right side of their neck, which they will swear is an old injury, but treatments to the right shoulder never seem to resolve it long term. The reason is because the right shoulder is just the tip of the iceberg.
Tightness, pain and stiffness in the right shoulder or neck

The tongue has a deep split down the center and is often coated with a white film. The head frequently feels heavy and dull with aches in the forehead and neck area, and the person wakes up usually one hour before they need to get out of bed. In other words, they rarely get the last part of sleep, resulting in inadequate sleep. The Adrenal type, on the other hand, sometimes gets up every 90 minutes or every two to three hours.
The morning is a struggle. This is because the liver can’t hold blood sugar for a full seven hours; morning grouching is actually coming from low blood sugar. When the person doesn’t eat for a ten-hour span (from dinner to the next morning), the amount of sugar in the blood is excessively depressed, creating irritableness, moodiness, mentally depressed feelings and lethargy, most noticeable upon waking. Many Liver types become more pleasant to be around in the evening after several meals.

The urine is usually darker in the morning and becomes increasingly watery and clearer as the day progresses. Being similar to the oil filter on your car, the liver can get dirty.

The whites of the eyes can show a tint of yellow and can be very bloodshot in the morning as well. The eyelids may become itchy and swollen.

Digestive problems are also a characteristic of the Liver type. This includes bloating, constipation and acid reflux.

The finger joints, particularly in the morning, become stiff and slightly swollen. This worsens if refined grains were consumed the night before, since many Liver cases have difficulty with gluten (the protein part of grains). Wheat and other grain products seem to aggravate arthritis and cause joint pain and inflammation in various parts of the body (midback, low back, lower neck, hands, right shoulder, ankles and even in the knees).
Stiff, sore and swollen finger joints in the morning

When refined grains are avoided, the arthritis many times disappears. The body seems to misidentify the gluten in these grains as a microbe, thus creating an inappropriate immune response. The only grains that don’t have gluten are rice, millet, spelt and oat. However, I’m recommending avoiding all grains on this diet.

A Liver type will often crave the very foods that will destroy the liver—fatty foods, bacon, chips and deep-fried foods, especially from fast-food restaurants.
When they are hungry, fried catfish, breaded onion rings or French fries look very appetizing. But after eating these foods, they will feel bloated, as their digestive system is poor, and they’ll usually start burping and belching after a high-fat meal.

Arthritis and bad skin are also indicative of liver damage.¹

If the liver is weakened, the person might get brown spots on the backs of their hands and throughout the body, called liver spots. Other skin issues that can occur are red dots, psoriasis, eczema, and even fungal growths on the scalp and toenails.

Itching is the most significant clinical symptom of severe liver cell damage.² The person seems to be always scratching something on their body; they experience itchiness especially at night. The itchiness usually occurs because the liver fluids are backing up into the blood.

With an advanced liver problem, the fingers occasionally looked clubbed (blunted and squarish) and the nail beds appear whitened.³ The nail bed should normally have a pinkish color.

As the liver becomes progressively more destroyed, the person’s breath develops a distinct odor, musty and sweetish. If you ever visited a sick room in the hospital, you’d notice this smell.

Sometimes the bowel movements become light colored because of a lack of bile production. Bile is the substance produced by the liver that assists in breaking down fats. It’s like the soap that dissolves the grease.

And because the liver has a main function of breaking down chemicals and environmental hormones, excessive estrogens can build up in the body. In major cases, a male body can start developing female characteristics—enlarged breasts, thinned skin and even a higher voice. Atrophy (shrinkage) of the testes can occur from this as well. Another side effect of excessive estrogens is spider veins. This is due to the blood vessel weakness caused by estrogens. As you might know, strokes are one of the negative side effects from hormone replacement therapy.

Since many side effects from medications affect the liver, the liver is a common weak link in a large percentage of the population. High cholesterol drugs have been known to weaken the liver.

I have personally observed a loss of memory in many people with poor liver
function. Even the medical textbooks describe “brain confusion” as part of liver problems.4

The liver can be a source of high blood pressure and edema (swelling) in the ankles.5 Blood needs to flow freely through the liver, so any obstructions within the liver (scar tissue) will create a back pressure.

As all fat-burning hormones create their effects through the liver, having a healthy liver is the most important first step in weight loss. Without a healthy liver, fat burning will be next to impossible.

The liver is definitely one organ that has the capacity to totally rejuvenate. It is constantly repairing itself, yet there is a point where it gets overwhelmed.

Causes of the Liver Body Type

A liver problem can come from many different sources. One is constipation. If the bowels cannot eliminate, the liver will become backed up. The toxicity in the body will prevent weight loss. I had one woman with this situation, who had received one of the introductory offers in my e-mail health tips inviting her to come in for a free consultation. When she showed up at the office, she was close to 400 pounds. She told me she had driven from Michigan to my office in Virginia for one consultation to help her lose weight. Then I found out she was having only one bowel movement per month! And she was more interested in weight loss. I explained that her bowels had to be handled before she could even think about losing weight. I never saw her again—her bowel problem wasn’t a concern.

Another source is the consumption of refined sugars, which include hidden sugars such as juice and alcohol. The liver is the first line in the chain of organs that deal with sugar. When you eat lots of sugar, the liver is forced to handle it.6 This creates major stress on the liver.

Sugar (as in cake, candy and other sweets) breaks down so fast it shocks the liver, making it weaker. On the other hand, vegetables break down so slowly you’ll never have to worry about overeating them; the nutrition level is so high in vegetables that your body just won’t let you eat too many. But if you take carbohydrates in their refined form—white sugar, alcohol, breads or even fruit juices—it’s easy to overeat, since nutrition is low and the body won’t tell you when to stop. Vitamin and mineral levels in food signal the brain and tell it when it is satisfied. Refined foods are stripped of their nutrition. The fiber in vegetables turns off the hunger switch as well.
Consuming excessive quantities of proteins and fats also puts damaging stress on the liver cells.

A further big cause of liver problems is toxic chemicals. This is another way in which estrogen from the environment along with pesticides and insecticides like DDT adversely affect the body. These substances become trapped in the liver and create altered function.

I have one patient from the Philippines who lost 42 pounds of water weight from his stomach within six weeks of doing my program. Depending on the size of the belly, it could take two to six months to completely flatten the stomach; the water comes off gradually. Some people have to stay on the Liver Enhancement Plan for the entire time. But the stomach comes off to the degree you create a healthy liver. You can’t take a person who has a lifetime of poor eating and expect two weeks of healthy eating to fix the liver. Unless you’ve been eating organic foods, the chances are good that you have been ingesting foods exposed to pesticides, insecticides, antibiotics, herbicides, fungicides and estrogen.

Viruses and funguses can destroy the liver, hepatitis being a common liver problem. When a person takes excessive antibiotics, he or she can end up with all sorts of fungi, unfriendly bacteria, yeast and Candida. Candida is a fungus-like yeast that is normally in balance with other friendly microbes; but an overgrowth of Candida, which spreads on the tongue and private parts, can occur after antibiotic use. If you have this situation, to replace the good bacteria consume more fermented foods: pickles, apple cider vinegar, sauerkraut and plain yogurt (low-fat). It is not true that people with yeast need to avoid friendly yeast foods—just the opposite.

The liver produces substances to break down fats, but when it is deficient, an overload of fatty foods aggravates the liver. This shows up as tightness around the chest (just below the ribs), pain or tightness in the right shoulder area, belching or burping, and bloating in the digestive system.

Cravings for fatty foods come from the body telling you it needs something. What? It needs the fat vitamins—A, E, D, K and certain B vitamins. If you listen to your body, it will explain what it needs. Sausage, meatloaf, bacon, overly cooked greasy roast beef, deep-fried onion rings, French fries, breaded meats, greasy barbecue ribs, all are hard on the liver and its associated gallbladder. Eating raw beets (shaved over salad) or steamed beets (not canned) each day will make these people feel very good. Beets thin the bile and are also great for constipation.

What many people don’t fully understand is that sugar, breads, pasta, cereals,
crackers, pancakes, waffles, juice and soda are equally hard on the liver. All will be converted to either fat or cholesterol. The mixture of sugars with fats—in the form of ice cream, barbeque ribs, breaded meats, etc.—also adds stress to the liver.

Liver damage could be brought about through nutritional deficiencies, especially the B vitamins. I’m not recommending going out and taking some synthetic vitamins, as they can create other problems. I would recommend avoiding refined foods, which deplete B vitamins. Breads, pasta, cereals and flour products are usually enriched with B vitamins because during the refining process B vitamins are destroyed. However, just spraying some synthetic vitamins doesn’t fix this problem. Consuming refined grain products and refined sugar depletes the body primarily of B vitamins and potassium. A very good source of the B vitamins comes from nutritional yeast at the health food store. One teaspoon per day would be very wise. Make sure you don’t confuse this with brewer’s yeast or baker’s yeast; get the nutritional yeast.

And by the way, synthetic B vitamins are made from coal tar, not food. Always consume vitamins from food. The foods on the label must be listed. If you see 50 mg of B1, 50 mg of B6, etc., then you can be pretty sure they are synthetic. Food concentrates come in smaller and different quantities, such as 3.4 mg, or 32.4 mg.

Consuming processed prepared foods high in MSG (monosodium glutamate) damages the liver. This is a way to take massive quantities of sodium without tasting the saltiness of it. The next day the hands get swollen and the ankles leave edema lines when you take off your socks, not to mention that blood pressure increases.

Many people avoid salt or sodium if they have high blood pressure. Why not increase the opposing mineral, potassium? In this program, you will be consuming high concentrates of potassium-rich foods. High-potassium, low-sodium foods would be all the leafy greens, kidney beans, avocados, honeydew melon and sea kelp.

Liver damage often will not show up on blood tests. The liver is rugged and takes lots of abuse. There can be considerable damage before symptoms are even present. I had one patient who was an alcoholic from age 14 through 42. He has been dry for ten years but it’s amazing he’s not dead.

Significant liver damage may show normal findings on liver tests.7

The most accurate way to determine liver damage is through a biopsy; of
course, that’s a bit invasive. Ultrasound of the abdomen can tell if the person is carrying fluid (ascites), but other tests might not tell the full story. Normal liver enzymes are not a good indicator of the absence of liver damage. Many people have normal levels yet have advanced liver disease.

Excessive scar tissue can occur in a damaged liver, a condition known as cirrhosis. In order to call it cirrhosis, however, it has to be major scarring; if it’s only minor scarring it can’t be called cirrhosis. It is my belief that many people have some minor scarring, enough to block liver function and cause weight gain and fluid retention in the abdomen. There are situations whereby cirrhosis is reversible, provided the damaging triggers are removed and sufficient time is allowed for a return to normal liver structure.

The best foods for the liver are raw cruciferous vegetables and small amounts of lean proteins (raw nuts, fish, etc.) Because the damaged liver has a difficult time breaking down proteins, raw proteins such as sushi are healthy for the liver. Cooked fish is the next best thing. Eggs are also good unless the gallbladder is sluggish.

In college, I don’t think I ate even one vegetable. I told myself, “I’ll eat healthy when I graduate.” Boy, was that smart! Shortly after graduating I started getting liver symptoms and it took a long time for me to recover. To this day I still don’t enjoy vegetables, but they are mainstays of my diet because now I know better. Every lunch, I make myself a salad from raw kale, almond slivers, a few walnuts, broccoli sprouts and a third of a raw shaved beet, with some Newman’s Own Ranch Dressing—very healthy for the liver.

If a person has liver damage, cholesterol accumulation will usually occur, primarily because the liver is the main organ that breaks it down. Lots of my patients with high cholesterol and even high blood pressure see excellent results from the Liver Enhancement Plan.

Here’s one success story that was sent to the person’s medical doctor:

“It is this program that enabled me to lower my cholesterol from 226 in May 2005 to 197 in March of this year. My triglycerides also dropped from 104 to 64 during this same testing period. Similarly, my wife’s cholesterol dropped from 248 in June 2005 to 187 in March of this year. Basically our carbs come from fresh dark green vegetables. We are eating at
least 4 ounces of animal protein with every meal, including eggs and hormone-free meats (chicken, fish, pork and beef). We eat virtually no grains, bread or pasta and have very little processed sugar intake. Additionally, I have lost 20 pounds since I started with the regimen.”

—RR, Centerville, VA

Cholesterol and Eggs

The Liver Enhancement Plan is an excellent program for anyone who has high cholesterol. Since we are on the topic of cholesterol, you should know about the antidote to cholesterol—lecithin. Rather than only avoiding cholesterol foods, it would better to make sure you include foods high in lecithin. And you might be surprised that a very excellent source of lecithin is the egg yolk—the exact thing people who have high cholesterol are told to avoid. Even the derivation of lecithin, the Greek word lekithos, means the yolk of an egg. Eating eggs with yolks is beneficial for the liver, not only because of the high lecithin, but because they are a complete balanced food and easy to digest. However, if you have a sluggish gallbladder, eating fish would be a better source of protein. Gallbladder symptoms give you right shoulder pain, fullness in the right lower abdomen area and burping and belching after you eat. Personally, I eat a four-ounce piece of fish for breakfast—it might sound strange, but my body runs better on that than other proteins. Twice a week I will consume eggs.

The best proteins for the liver are seafood (scallops, shrimp and squid), fish, eggs, chicken and lamb. Red meats do tend to be a bit more stressful to digest than fish, but in small quantities they are fine. A large cooked piece of meat is very stressful on the liver. As far as red meat is concerned, it’s much easier for the liver to digest a rare steak then a fully cooked one. However, don’t ask for a “rare” burger at the McDonald’s drive-up window. I’m talking about a high-quality steak. A small amount of red meat would be okay a few times per week; but when you add the bun to the hamburger, it creates more stress on the liver.

Atherosclerosis

While we are on the topic of cholesterol, let me tell you my theory on what causes atherosclerosis (so-called clogged arteries). People have this idea that when they eat excessive fatty foods the cholesterol floats around in their arteries and starts to plug them up. This is not what happens. The plaque occurs not on the inside of the artery but within the inner lining of the artery. So it must be
more an internal problem than cholesterol floating and plugging. Some other credible authors believe that what initiates this is a breakdown within the artery wall.9

The arteries are made of collagen, which is a protein. Therefore, hormones that destroy proteins must be involved in the process (excessive adrenal and deficiency of growth hormone). This could be why people with adrenal problems bruise easily. Repair and maintenance of these arteries also require vitamin C. That is why people with vitamin C deficiencies get weaknesses within the blood vessels, as in bleeding gums, spider veins and varicose veins. Vitamin C helps in the formation of the collagen, or cement, that holds this protein together. Vitamin E is the other vitamin that assists in the repair of tissues—it is the healing vitamin. I personally believe that in a vitamin C and E deficient state the person is very susceptible to atherosclerosis. Mushrooms provide an excellent source of vitamin C. Raw wheat germ is an excellent source of vitamin E; however, you don’t need much—one teaspoon three times per week. Leafy green vegetables are the foods that contain both these vitamins.

**Liver Spots**

This leads to another topic—liver or aging spots, usually on the backs of the hands. There are many theories about this. My theory is that a vitamin E deficiency has something to do with creating this brown pigment. It could also come from the destruction of certain liver cells that make the pigment. Another cause could be a deficiency in a hormone from the pituitary gland in the brain that triggers the color of the skin.

What’s interesting about this is that a good portion of the body’s vitamin E is stored in the pituitary gland. That is because it is needed for making hormones, especially all the sex hormones in the ovaries—estrogen, testosterone, etc. During menopause when the ovaries shut down, a woman’s vitamin E levels dramatically decrease 100x due to the altered pituitary-ovary connection; and somehow when the liver loses its vitamin E supply, this brown pigment gets released. I would recommend all women over the age of fifty consume a half-teaspoon of raw wheat germ every day to keep their vitamin E at a normal level. Wheat germ oil also works.

**Growth Hormone**

Growth hormone (GH) is directly associated with the liver and works through the liver. It is fat-burning and anti-aging; it also controls the rebuilding of joints. A bad liver can prevent growth hormone from being produced. This
shows up in excess fat, less lean body mass and squeaky joints (to put it technically).

I’m sure you have heard the hype on how GH is the fountain of youth. Growth hormone makes children’s bones grow, regulates the size of your organs, decreases fat (fat burning), increases lean body mass, and controls sleep cycles the first half of the night. It rebuilds body tissue—joints, bone and muscle. Other hormones break down proteins (muscles, joints and bones), like the adrenal stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol, if in excess, will eat up your thigh muscles, making it difficult to climb stairs or get up from a chair. In many cases, it’s not growth hormone that is the problem but the cortisol that inhibits it. Years of stress, lack of sleep, bad foods, low-calorie diets, hard-core exercise, pain, inflammation and overactive adrenal glands can block growth hormone.

Many people take growth hormone without ever first finding out why they might be deficient—a poor liver. Growth hormone is made to protect, spare or save muscle, bone and joint proteins from being destroyed while at the same time keeping the fuel adequate between meals. The pancreas hormone, insulin, regulates fuel when you eat. Growth hormone regulates fuel between meals.

Since growth hormone is stimulated when you are not eating (between meals), we recommend, if you are a Liver type, not snacking between meals. Only consume three meals per day. The one exception is during the Liver Enhancement Plan, which will be explained in chapter 10.

Another activity that helps GH is exercise—not just any old exercise but intense exercise. There seems to be a direct relationship between growth hormone and the intensity of exercise, especially weight training and short, quick, intense types of sports. The problem is that cortisol is stimulated by stress and cortisol inhibits growth hormone. The trick is to trigger growth hormone without triggering cortisol. This means you need to do high-intensity, short-duration exercise with lots of rest in between. You’ll learn more about this in chapter 14. Getting enough sleep also triggers growth hormone and for this reason fat burning occurs during sleep.

We’ve discussed what increases GH. Now let me mention what you need to avoid in order to prevent a decrease in GH. Sugar blocks GH. It’s not sugar directly but the hormone that is triggered by sugar—insulin. Insulin is the fat-making hormone. Insulin changes carbohydrates (sugar) into fat and cholesterol. When insulin rises, growth hormone is blocked. This is why a belly full of carbohydrates before bed will inhibit GH from working through the night. Even a small glass of juice or wine will prevent growth hormone through the night. I’m sorry, but that’s the way it is.
Don’t eat carbs at least 90 minutes before bed, especially the sweet ones. This includes hidden carbs such as beer, flavored yogurt and breads. You’d be shocked to find out what they put sugar in these days—start reading labels and you’ll see. You would burn more fat if you didn’t eat anything before bed. I’m not saying never, but the more you stick to this, the more quickly fat will be burned. If you’re going to drink, drink your alcohol in the morning (just kidding). Eating carbs like juice, sugary sports drinks or so-called protein bars one hour before you work out can block growth hormone as well. I wouldn’t even recommend eating fruit before working out.

Some of us just don’t have time to sleep. I’ve had patients who get only three to four hours routinely. Getting less than seven hours per night can inhibit fat-burning hormones. If you are having sleep problems, there are several things you can do. Long walks during the daylight; reading a book before bed instead of watching TV; taking a calcium supplement (calcium with magnesium citrate); doing physical work around the yard, especially if you sit behind a computer screen; and consuming four celery sticks before bed are all good remedies.

Some research has found initial benefits from taking growth hormone: subjects on GH lost an average of 14.4 percent body fat and gained 8.8 percent lean body mass without diet or exercise. The problem was that after several months of being on growth hormone, major side effects began: carpal tunnel syndrome, fluid retention, high blood pressure, joint pain, high blood sugar, diabetes, cancer and inflammation in the pancreas. This is because when you bypass your body’s own production of GH, your body’s production starts to decrease. Go ahead and take it if you have eight months to live. Other than that, I wouldn’t recommend it.
Key Liver type indicators are potbelly, brown spots on the backs of hands, yellowness in the whites of eyes and poor joints.

Below is a list of symptoms one can experience from a poorly working liver. Take a pencil and check off the ones that you experience in greater or lesser degree.

**Liver Type Symptoms**

- Potbelly (very little external fat, mostly fluid)
- Poor joints
- Yellowness in whites of eyes (severe cases)
- Bloodshot eyes in the morning
- Eyelids itchy and swollen
- Skin problems
- Brown spots on backs of hands and throughout body
- Little red dots on skin
- Bloating after eating
- Burping or belching after eating
- Acid reflux
- Constipation
- Hemorrhoids
- Decreased tolerance for fatty foods and refined grains
- Cravings for fried foods and sour foods
- Chemical sensitivities
- Stiffness in lower back and upper back between the shoulder blades
- Pain or tightness in right shoulder area
- Liver roll of fat (just below the rib cage), seen mostly in women
- Dull pressure and sensation of fullness just under right rib cage
- Gallbladder problems
- Headaches
- Arthritis
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Varicose veins
- Spider veins
- Hives and itchiness
- Bad breath
- Tongue coated with white film
- Deep split down center of tongue
- Early morning insomnia (wake up one to two hours before alarm)
- Irritability and moodiness, especially in the morning
☐ Foggy brain in the morning
☐ Finger joints stiff, sore and swollen in the morning
☐ Fingers clubbed, with whitened nail beds
☐ Urine darker in morning, getting clearer during day
☐ Light-colored bowel movements
☐ Swelling in ankles
☐ Overheating of body, especially hot feet at night (not hot flashes)

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