

A publication of the
Pinellas County Health Department

Liver Awareness Month Your Liver Treats You Right

Your liver, the largest organ inside your body, plays a vital role in regulating life processes. This complex organ performs many functions essential to life. *You simply cannot live without it.*

25,000, 000 Americans - 1 in every 10 - are or have been afflicted with liver diseases. By knowing about your liver, you can help take care of this important organ in your body.



aerosol cleaners, make sure the room is ventilated, or wear a mask.

- **Don't eat too many fatty foods.** Your liver makes the cholesterol your body needs. Eating a well-balanced diet will help your liver properly do its job.

Know the risks for contracting hepatitis A, B and C.

Hepatitis A is spread through the fecal-oral route.

Risk factors include not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, eating uncooked food prepared by an infected person who did not wash his/her hands, drinking contaminated water, and having oral/anal sex.

Hepatitis B is spread through blood and body fluids. Risk factors include having unprotected sex with an infected person, using illegal injection drugs, using the razor or toothbrush of an infected person, and exposure to infected blood or body fluids.

Hepatitis C is spread primarily through direct blood contact and can be transmitted through contaminated needles used in IV drug injection, as well as tattooing or body piercing. There is also a small risk of contracting hepatitis C by having unprotected sex with multiple partners.

Remember: Your liver is a non-complaining organ. Overloading it with drugs, alcohol and other junk can destroy it. Although many people with liver diseases or disorders often have no

symptoms, some warning signs can include:

- Yellow discoloration of the skin or eyes;
- Abdominal swelling or severe abdominal pain;
- Prolonged itching of the skin;
- Very dark urine or pale stools; or bloody or tar-like stools;
- Chronic fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite.

If you have liver disease: Follow your doctor's advice on food, exercise and other

lifestyle guidelines. Learn about liver disease and understand how your diet

Here are some functions your liver performs:

- **Stores iron** reserves you need, as well as a lot of vitamins and other minerals.
- **Makes bile** to help you digest your food.



- **Detoxifies poisonous chemicals**, such as alcohol and drugs (over-the-counter, prescribed or illegal drugs).

- **Stores energy**, like a battery, by stockpiling sugar (fat carbohydrates and glucose) until you need it.

- **Manufactures proteins** that your body needs to stay healthy.

- **Removes poisons** from

the air, exhaust, smoke and chemicals you breathe.

- **Helps defend you** against the "germ warfare" going on in your body all the time; takes cold germs, flu bugs and other germs you encounter, and weakens them.



Here are some ways to keep your liver healthy:

- **Don't drown your liver** in beer, alcohol or wine. Even one drink is too much for some people and could scar your liver for life.
- **Watch the drugs.** All drugs are chemicals, and when you mix them up without a doctor's advice you could create something poisonous that could damage your liver badly. Medicine is sometimes necessary. But taking pills when they aren't necessary is a bad habit.
- **Be careful with aerosol** sprays. Your liver has to detoxify what you breathe in. So when you use

For more information call 1-800-GO-LIVER (465-4837) or 1-888-4HEP-USA (443-7872) or visit www.liverfoundation.org

Our Vision

Healthier
People in a
Healthier
Environment



Pinellas County Health Department

Early Detection Saves Lives

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In the United States, more than 211,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed this year.

Thankfully, progress in mammography technology helps doctors find the disease earlier. And the sooner breast cancer is detected, the less likely a woman will need invasive and uncomfortable treatments, and the more likely she will survive. As a result, **breast cancer survivors make up the largest group of cancer survivors.**

Mammography screening is the single most effective method of early detection. Therefore, an annual mammogram is recommended for women over the age of 40. A clinical examination by a health professional should be done yearly.

Women can take charge of their breast health by performing a breast self-exam every month and understanding their personal risks of the disease—and reporting any breast change promptly to their health care provider. **Special populations at risk for breast cancer include minority and older women.**



African-American women have a higher breast cancer death rate than women of any other racial or ethnic population.

Many **women over the age of 60** feel that screening for breast cancer is not necessary. On the contrary, women over 60 are more at risk, not less, for breast cancer.

In an effort to encourage women to have an annual mammography screening, the third Friday in October (October 21) has been designated **National Mammography Day**. On this day, or throughout the month, women are encouraged to make a mammography appointment.

The Pinellas County Health Department offers low-cost or free breast and cervical cancer exams for women who are 50 to 64 and under-insured or uninsured. The program includes breast and pelvic exam, Pap test and mammogram. For more information, call (727) 824-6917.

For more information, visit www.nbcam.org or www.cancer.org.

Healthy Ideas

Women can take charge of their breast health by having an annual mammogram, performing a breast self-exam every month and understanding their personal risks of the disease — and reporting any breast change promptly to their health care provider.



Breast Self Exam (BSE)

Examining your breasts is an important way to find a breast cancer early, when it's most likely to be cured. Not every cancer can be found this way, but it is an important step you can and should take for yourself.

No woman wants to do a breast self exam and for many the experience is frustrating—you may feel things but not know what they mean. However, the more you examine your breasts, the more you will learn about them and the easier it will become for you to tell if something unusual has occurred. **BSE is an essential part of taking care of yourself and reducing your risk of breast cancer.**

Try to get in the habit of doing a BSE once a month to familiarize yourself with how your breasts normally look and feel. Examine yourself several days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen and tender. If you are no longer having periods, choose a day that's easy to remember, such as the first or last day of the month.

Don't panic if you think you feel a lump. Most women have some lumps or lumpy areas in their breasts all the time. **Eight out of ten breast lumps that are removed are benign, non-cancerous.**

The upper, outer area—ear your armpit—tends to have the most noticeable lumps and bumps. The lower half of your breast can feel like a sandy or pebbly beach. The area under the nipple can feel like a collection of large grains. Another part might feel like a lumpy bowl of oatmeal.

What's important is that you get to know the look and feel of your breasts. Does something stand out as different from the rest (like a rock on a sandy beach)? Has anything changed? Bring to the attention of your doctor any changes in your breasts that last over a full month's cycle, or seem to get worse or more obvious over time.

Knowing how your breasts usually look and feel may also help you avoid needless biopsies — a procedure in which the doctor takes a small sample of breast tissue and examines it under a microscope.

Studies show that regular breast self-exams, combined with an annual exam by a doctor, improves the chances of detecting cancer early.



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