LiveNaturally

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EASY-BREEZY BRUNCH... WITH COCKTAILS!
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STRESS-BUSTING SUPPLEMENTS
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noodles the ASIAN WAY

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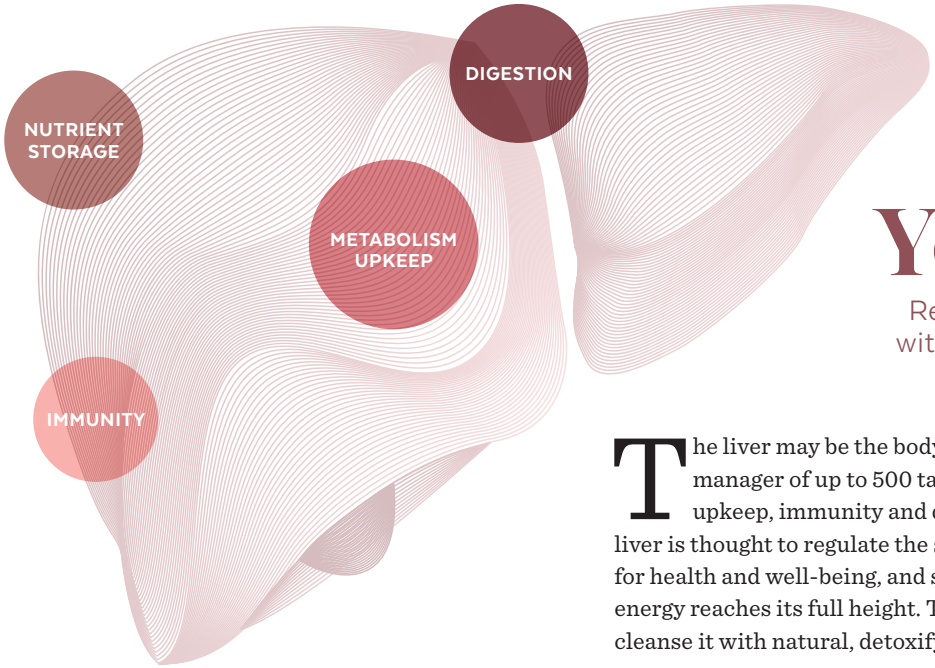

Love Your Liver

Recharge this workhorse organ with a clean and nourishing diet.

BY SUJA NATARAJAN

The liver may be the body's most underrated organ. It's the dedicated manager of up to 500 tasks, including nutrient storage, metabolism upkeep, immunity and digestion. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the liver is thought to regulate the smooth flow of qi, or the vital energy necessary for health and well-being, and spring is considered the season when the liver's energy reaches its full height. That means it's an ideal time to nourish and cleanse it with natural, detoxifying foods.

VEGETABLES

"Cruciferous vegetables are good sources of fermentable fiber and polyphenols necessary for gut health, which in turn reduces one of the primary sources of liver inflammation," says Barry Sears, Ph.D., president of the Inflammation Research Foundation and author of *The Zone Diet* series (zonediet.com). Broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower are high in fiber, and studies show that beets contain beneficial compounds that reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, which can lead to liver disease. Beta-carotene-packed carrots also remove toxins and heavy metals from the liver, says Rebecca Lee, R.N., whose website, remediesforme.com, provides natural and holistic health remedies.

FRUITS

Numerous types of fruit are rich in antioxidants that nourish the liver. Lee recommends lemons, because they contain especially high levels of vitamin C, which elevates the body's glutathione, a powerful antioxidant that, among its many functions, activates detoxifying enzymes in the liver. Lemons also decrease inflammation and help flush out uric acid and other buildups, Lee says. Dr. Sears suggests berries, particularly blueberries, because they contain the highest levels of antioxidant-like polyphenols and a minimal amount of natural sugar, supporting liver health.

HEALTHY FATS

Excess fat in the body exhausts the liver and impedes its performance. According to a study published in *Gastroenterology Research and Practice,* omega-3 fatty acids reduced liver fat in patients with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. Reduction of saturated fats and omega-6 fatty acids will decrease the production of pro-inflammatory compounds, suggests Sears. Mackerel, salmon fish oil, walnuts, flaxseed, olive oil and avocado are high in omega-3 fatty acids.

HERBS

Lee says you can also support your liver with herbs, including milk thistle, which several studies suggest may protect the liver from toxins, and dandelion root, a natural diuretic that helps flush toxins from organs, including the liver. The antioxidant properties of garlic keep toxic substances filtered by your liver from reaching other organs, and research has shown that turmeric can boost the liver's protective and regenerative properties.

SULFUR-RICH FOODS

The fermentable fiber in sulfur-rich foods provides gut microbiota nutrients to assist in repair of a leaky gut, thereby reducing liver inflammation, says Sears. Sulfur also facilitates conversion of water-soluble toxins for rapid elimination through bile or urine. Onion, garlic, artichokes, leeks and shallots are a few sulfur-rich foods.

DID YOU KNOW?

With the help of vitamin K, the liver produces proteins that are important in blood clotting. It is also one of the organs that break down old or damaged blood cells. The liver plays a central role in all metabolic processes in the body. In fat metabolism, the liver cells break down fats and produce energy.

SHUTTERSTOCK