

## A Plant-Based Diet Promotes Liver Health

You can't live without your liver, so keeping it healthy is obviously an important priority. Most people know that drinking a lot of alcohol is a primary cause of liver disease; so is hepatitis. You may not know, however, that your diet may be another important and modifiable cause of liver disease.

An 18-year study on liver health found that people who ate a lot of high-cholesterol foods had more than twice the risk of chronic liver disease than those who ate very little. Researchers also found that eating a lot of protein increased the risk. On the other hand, people who ate a higher amount of carbohydrates had a 58% lower risk of developing liver disease during the 18-year study.

Cholesterol is only found in animal foods (meats and dairy products). Most animal products are high in protein. Most plant-based foods tend to be lower in protein and higher in carbohydrates.

If you want to keep your liver healthy, avoid alcohol and choose a diet low in cholesterol and high in complex carbohydrates. This is primarily a plant-based diet. Your liver will thank you.

*Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter. Sept. 2009.*



### What Is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is a family of liver diseases that make your liver inflamed and stop it from working right. The most common hepatitis viruses are A, B, and C.

Hepatitis is passed by sharing needles in drug use or by sexual contact with an infected partner. Excessive alcohol use can also result in hepatitis.

The disease causes inflammation and ultimately damage to the liver. Symptoms include fatigue, poor appetite, and a jaundiced (yellowish) appearance.

Learn more about hepatitis from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/HEPATITIS/](http://www.cdc.gov/HEPATITIS/)

## Protect Your Vision

It's a fact of life that eyes change with age. Baby boomers – Americans born between 1946 and 1964 – are at the stage when many are affected by vision problems. More than 2 million Americans have impaired vision caused by serious eye conditions such as macular degeneration or glaucoma, or medical conditions like diabetes or brain tumors.

Adding certain nutrients to your diet every day can help preserve vision and prevent age-related eye diseases. The American Optometric Association recommends the following eye-healthy nutrients and foods:

- ✓ **Lutein and zeaxanthin** – found in colorful fruits and vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, kale, corn, green beans, peas, oranges, and tangerines.
- ✓ **Essential fatty acids** – found in vegetable oils, nuts, soy and soy flour, seeds, flax meal, whole grains, fatty fish (including tuna, salmon, and herring), chicken, and eggs.
- ✓ **Vitamin C** – found in fruits and vegetables, including oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, papaya, green peppers, and tomatoes.

Get more information on eye health:  
[www.nei.nih.gov/health/](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/)



- ✓ **Vitamin E** – found in vegetable oils (including safflower and corn oil), almonds, pecans, filberts (hazelnuts), sunflower seeds, and sweet potatoes.
  - ✓ **Zinc** – found in poultry, shellfish, milk, baked beans, and whole grains.
- Do you have a vision problem? Having difficulty telling whether your socks match your slacks and not being able to clearly see a car in the street could be warning signs of impaired vision. Other symptoms include:
- Holding reading materials close to your face or at an angle
  - Difficulty writing on the line or writing clearly
    - Changes in the way you drive or walk
    - Difficulty identifying faces or objects
    - Difficulty working or reading with ordinary lighting
  - Difficulty getting food onto a fork or pouring liquids into a cup without spilling
  - More pronounced hearing loss as visual cues are lost

If you experience any of these symptoms, make an appointment for a comprehensive eye exam with an eye doctor right away.

*American Optometric Association. 2009.*

## How to Develop Friendships

Having a close relationship with another person – whether it is a friend, spouse, or relative – can improve your health. Research shows that friendship can help reduce your risk of heart attack and depression, help you sleep better, lower your blood pressure, and help you live longer. People who work together and are friends are more productive than work groups where friendship is not involved.

- Reaching out to establish a friendship sometimes happens simply and casually. At other times, it takes special effort.
- Go to community activities that you are interested in, such as poetry readings, art shows, or concerts.
- Join a sports team.
- Ask someone to join you at a cafe for lunch or go for a walk during your lunch break.
- Send a short, friendly e-mail to encourage a co-worker.



## What's the Secret to Beautiful Skin?

Beautiful skin isn't so much a result of genes, according to a recent study. To a large degree, your lifestyle

determines how smooth and beautiful your complexion will be as you age. Researchers examined the skin of 65 pairs of twins for coarse wrinkles, brown or pink spots, and dilated blood vessels. Each twin also filled out a survey on lifestyle habits. From the data, researchers concluded that spending too much time in the sun, smoking, and being overweight increased the chances that your skin would make you look older than you are.

For beautiful, healthy skin:

- ✓ **Use sunscreen or a makeup base** with UV protection.

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen, nursing home, or social action committee.
- Offer to help a neighbor or co-worker with a particular task if you think it would be appreciated.
- Listen intently when the other person is talking.
- Be honest, but tactful.
- Keep confidences (no gossiping).
- Don't expect your friends to solve your problems for you. And, once you've shared a problem or irritation, drop it. Friends share feelings, but friendships wane when one person dominates the conversation with their pain, problems, or private anxieties all of the time.
- Developing good friendships will take time and effort to achieve – but it's worth it for your mental and physical health.

*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2009.*



## Form a kindness club

There are plenty of things you can do for others on your own. But sometimes it's nice to be part of a group that practices kindness. If you like planning small or large projects and enjoy working with a group, you might want to form a kindness club. The club can be made up of neighbors, coworkers, friends, or acquaintances. It can meet in your home, a community center, coffee house, library, church, or conference room where you work. The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has produced a projects planning guide with helpful resources. Start small, and have fun!

[www.actsofkindness.org/  
file\\_uploads/files/215\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.actsofkindness.org/file_uploads/files/215_pdf.pdf)

The American Academy of Dermatology offers skin care tips specific to your skin type:

[www.aad.org/media/background/  
news/Releases/Saving\\_Face\\_101  
How\\_to\\_Customize\\_Your\\_Skin  
Care\\_Ro/](http://www.aad.org/media/background/news/Releases/Saving_Face_101_How_to_Customize_Your_Skin_Care_Ro/)

## ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

**Q:** Is there a difference between celiac sprue and gluten intolerance?

**A:** Go to [www.wellspring.com/ask-celiac.pdf](http://www.wellspring.com/ask-celiac.pdf) to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [well@wellspring.com](mailto:well@wellspring.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.