Raising Awareness about Hepatitis C and the Liver

October 1, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Those living with hepatitis C and anyone with a liver, take note: October is Liver Awareness Month. Although these awareness campaigns target many worthy causes, the liver is especially deserving of this attention. This silent, non-complaining organ is the largest internal organ in the body. Shaped like a rounded triangle, the liver is under the rib cage on the right side of the body, opposite the heart. On average, the liver weighs 3 pounds and is the size of a football.

The liver contains more than 300 billion cells. With more than 500 functions, the liver is involved in nearly everything we do. From digestion to the manufacture of clotting factors, the liver plays a part in hormone regulation, metabolism, nutrition, and immunity. The liver is the body's industrial plant, and without it, life would cease.

Everything goes through the liver--everything you eat, drink, breathe, and apply to your skin. The liver is the filter between the digestive system and the bloodstream, and this mighty organ protects and helps the rest of the body as everything passes through it. Approximately 1.5 quarts of blood go through the liver every minute.

The most amazing thing about the liver is its regenerative properties, meaning that the liver will manufacture new cells. Up to 75% of the liver can be damaged, and it can still function. However, although the liver can sustain a great deal of damage, this is not an excuse to be careless with the liver. People with liver disease suffer from multiple health complaints, most notably, fatigue and digestive problems. If liver disease progresses, quality of life can be severely impaired, leading to cirrhosis, liver failure, cancer, and death.

Celebrate Liver Awareness Month by taking special care of your liver. After all, you can't live without it.

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