

Functions of the Liver

The liver is the largest internal organ of the body. It is a wedge-shaped organ located underneath the right rib cage. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood and fights infections. Everything that is eaten by mouth, breathed through the lungs, and absorbed through the skin has to be processed by the liver: food is converted into nutrients, vitamins, minerals and sugars are stored, bile is produced, and substances that are harmful to the body are destroyed in the liver.

The liver has over 500 vital functions, the primary ones being:

- Bile production and excretion
- Excretion of bilirubin, cholesterol, hormones, and drugs
- Metabolism of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates
- Enzyme activation
- Storage of glycogen, vitamins, and minerals
- Synthesis of plasma proteins, such as albumin, and clotting factors
- Blood detoxification and purification

Over time, hepatitis viruses such as hepatitis B or C can lead to major liver damage such as cirrhosis and even death.

