

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## *The Liver*

**THE** liver is the largest organ in the body. It weighs about 3 pounds in the average sized man. It is located on the upper right side of the body (under the ribcage). The liver is a blood organ that processes everything we eat, drink, breathe in and absorb through the skin. In fact, the liver performs over 500 chemical functions that keep us healthy.

HCV infects and damages the liver. In general, people who have HIV and HCV have a higher and faster rate of liver damage compared to those who only have HCV. The liver is important for people with HIV because it processes medications including HIV medications. Your doctor or nurse will check your liver often while you are on HIV drugs to make sure the medications are not harming the liver.

### **Check this out:**

There are many things that you can do to help the liver and your health:

- Get the hepatitis A (HAV) and hepatitis B (HBV) vaccines—if you have not been previously infected or vaccinated
- Cut down or stop drinking alcohol. If you can't stop or cut down on the amount of alcohol you drink ask for help from family, friends and professionals who treat alcohol and drug addiction
- Be careful with any drug (prescribed, over-the-counter or street drugs) you are using. Make sure to tell your doctor and nurse what you are taking
- Try to reduce any stress you have—stress is bad for your overall health including HIV and the liver
- Eat a healthy diet with a lot of vegetables, fruit, and lean meat. Talk with a nutritionist (diet specialist) to advise you
- Make sure to keep any medical appointments you have
- Take all of your medications as your doctor and nurse instruct you

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