

JOHN
WINTERS

HEALTH CARE ESSENTIALS

The liver is the chemistry lab of the body

The days are finally getting longer and it's time for spring cleaning. After a long winter, it's an excellent idea to clean and refresh your home. Since your body is actually your primary home, it could use a little spring cleaning too.

Let's explore how a healthy body stays vibrant and working smoothly.

What the liver is

Our bodies have many ways to stay clean, orderly and working properly. Most folks may not realize that the liver is especially important to our health and well-being. This 3-pound organ is credited with performing over 500 tasks critical to survival. Sometimes called the body's "chemistry lab," the liver cleans our blood, balances blood sugar, makes digestive juices hormones and cholesterol. OK, that's only five things — 495 left.

Interestingly, all nutrient-rich blood leaving the stomach and intestines goes straight to the liver before being allowed into the general circulation. The liver inspects, cleans and removes toxins. And the growing list of toxins in our foods, air and homes can be overwhelming these days. Liver cells die in the process of doing their jobs, but the liver is uniquely able to regenerate itself. This organ can miraculously grow back in less than two weeks, even if 75% of it is removed.

What the liver does

The liver is in charge of regulating blood clotting, blood sugar and cholesterol. Blood clotting is a very important and complicated job. There is a very fine balance between blood that is too thick or too thin. Thick blood can cause strokes; thin blood can allow bleeding. Either extreme is deadly. You need your blood thickness to be just right.

The liver makes, stores and breaks down sugar, depending on what your body needs. A steady, moderate supply of sugar is crucial to survival. Any highs or lows in blood sugar can cause fatigue, brain fog, irritability or worse. A healthy liver takes care of all this automatically. Most of the cholesterol in your blood is made by your liver because it is so important to every cell in the body.

What harms the liver

Having so many responsibilities makes the liver vulnerable to problems. You can take simple steps to make life easier for your liver. What you eat, drink, and do every day makes a difference.

A few of the biggest challenges for your liver are alcohol, sugar and drugs. Packaged foods with added sugar, especially "high fructose corn syrup" (HFCS), are contributing to the current epidemic of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and "fatty liver disease." A recent study found that children drinking one soda containing HFCS per week had problems; 90% were obese and 38% had fatty liver disease. HFCS clogs and inflames the liver. These are major problems — to the health of the individual, society and the health care system! HFCS is a cheap sweetener synthesized from corn and used in soft drinks, baked goods, candy and cereal.

Similarly, synthetic fats, such as "partially hydrogenated" oils that contain trans fats, are cheap man-made unhealthy substitutes found recently in the human diet.

Some drugs are also a challenge. Many drugs are detoxified in the liver and some cause damage. "NSAIDS" like aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen and acetaminophen (Tylenol), statins, some antibiotics and steroids can cause liver disease.

Tylenol is especially important to monitor because it's in more than 600 popular drugs used to treat symptoms (not the cause) of allergies, colds, headaches and insomnia. Tylenol's maximum therapeutic dose is close to the toxic dose, so you need to be cautious.

What helps the liver

Even a cursory understanding of what harms the liver offers answers to what helps it. You can reduce risk of liver disease by being careful with alcohol and drugs — both OTC and prescription — and by never mixing the two.

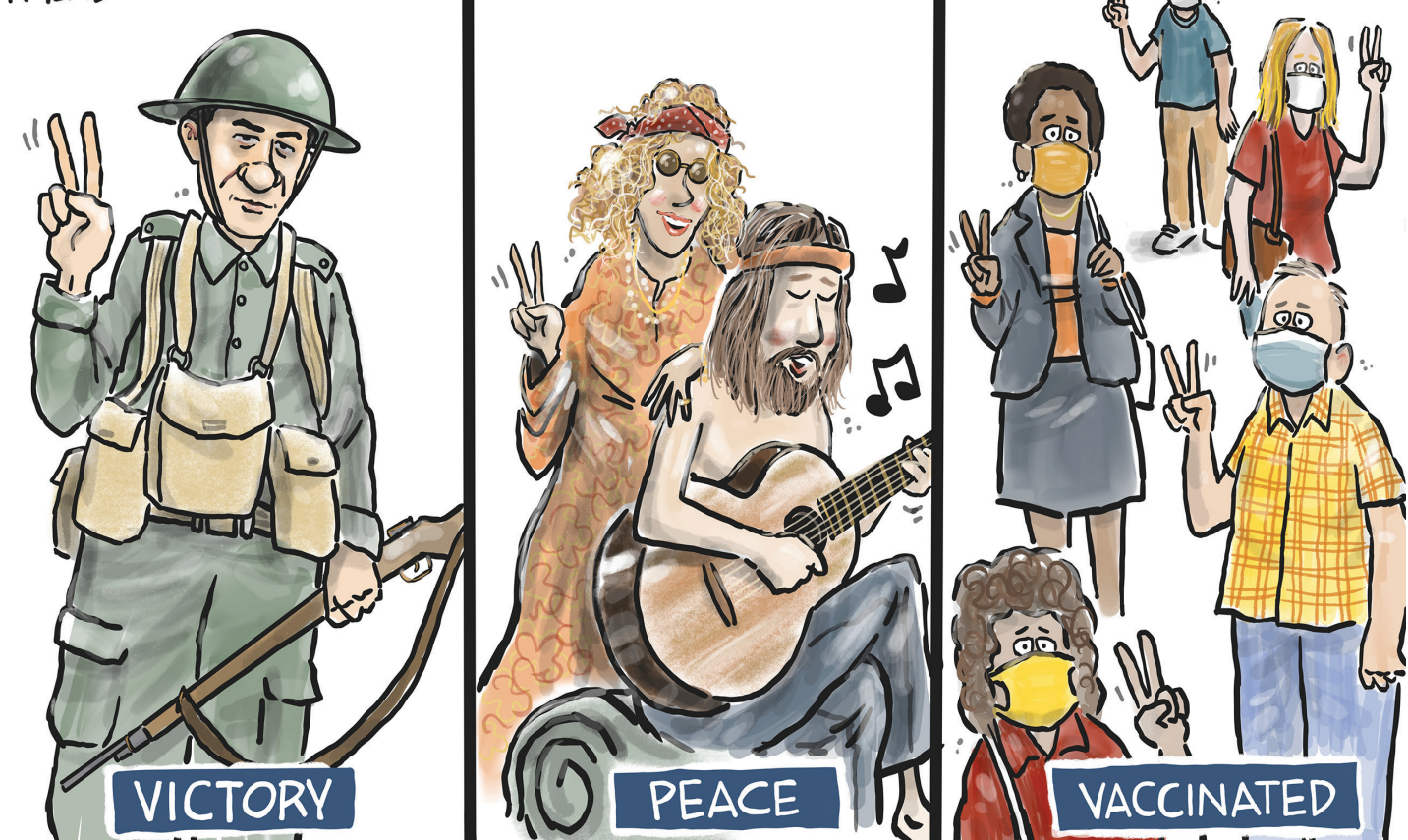
Weight loss, even just a few pounds, is very helpful. Hot tip: "body fat" is more important than "total weight." As people get healthier their body fat decreases while their lean muscle mass increases, often resulting in no net weight change. This is discouraging if you only measure total body weight.

As always, what you do most days is the most important factor in your health. Improve your nutrition — more whole foods, less processed synthetic fake foods. "Good fats" from nuts, seeds, olive oil and avocado help the liver. Whole grains, vegetables and low-sugar fruit is great, as is lean protein from fish, chicken, turkey and beans. Stay — or get — active. Allow yourself plenty sleep and have some fun every day. Chip away at your goals on a daily basis, and try not to be perfect right away, OK?

John Winters is a naturopathic physician, who recently retired after operating a practice in La Grande since 1992.

'V' Signs~A Brief History...

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An Easter not so long ago



LINDSAY
MURDOCK

FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN

I got dressed quickly. Somehow, I had missed the sunrise in my attempt to wake up early. There wasn't time for a shower, and touching up my blush and mascara was going to have to be good enough. Soft sounds of the cow/calf pairs mooing echoed through the canyon below our home. The sky was a gray that hangs low and presses down — without a beam of sunlight in sight. The blossoms on the trees outside the window were quiet as I went through the motions of getting ready.

I waited in the car for my parents. My heart felt heavy, and my eyes weren't quite as sparkly as usual. I could feel tears, but none came. We rode the 25 minutes to town quietly because there wasn't much to say. This life was not, and is not, what I thought it would be on a lot of different levels. Somehow, these skewed ideas of what life should look like fill my mind, and when it doesn't match up to the silent expectations I have in my head, devastation and bits of depression fill my insides.

I say I trust, but do I? I write about faith and grace and love that comes easy, but having that kind of faith and love and grace on days like this one isn't easy at all.

It's Easter, and I hadn't bought matching shirts for my boys, or any special candy. I hadn't filled one basket, and there were no homemade rolls waiting to be warmed later in the day, or a yummy dessert to drool over. Somehow, this was a broken version of beautiful that I was having a hard time accepting. The day to celebrate the grace and freedom we have in Christ was heavy. I drove into town dreading the questions and looks.

"Where is the rest of your family?"

"Where are those beautiful boys you love so very much?"

"Why are you here without them?"

These are the questions people ask without saying a thing sometimes, and often ask without intending to hurt or pry. I practiced my smile in the mirror, and rehearsed the words and answers I would give.

The music started, and the voices of several of my beautiful and talented friends filled the room, the room where there was standing room only. Also the room I call home on most Sundays

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throughout the year. Notes played and voices were raised, filling the space I had found myself in. My eyes saw clearly for the first time that day as I looked up instead of all around.

Easter isn't about families looking perfect. It isn't about new clothes or baskets filled with treasures, although those are definite perks. Easter is about freedom and forgiveness, about an empty tomb, and about an amazing God who sent His Son to this world to die for each

and every one of us. The stone had been rolled away, and I found myself standing in a sanctuary with my eyes lifted up and my heart filled.

I had made the right choice. I didn't guilt my three "men" into fitting into something the world says they have to do or a scenario that I wish they would be a part of. I am not here to tell them how or what to believe. That morning, I had given them a choice, and they had chosen home as their sanctuary and place to find hope and peace. They chose that which they knew well, and I chose what I knew well, too.

I am a wife and mother who doesn't cover much up. I don't sugarcoat or paint pictures of things that don't exist. And on that particular Easter, on one of the most beautiful days of the year, I sat in church with messed-up hair that hadn't been washed, touched-up makeup, and a heart exploding with gratitude for the life I am able to live. I was with my parents that morning, and that was truly the most perfect way to spend that Easter morning. They've raised me well, and still are 40+ years later.

At 3:30 p.m. that very same day, no one had matching anything on and there still weren't any plastic eggs filled. There was a ham baking in the roaster, and the potatoes were boiling on the stove top. The eggs had been eaten earlier that morning while I had been at church, and I hadn't purchased any candy while shopping for rolls and strawberries. It wasn't a "normal" Easter in any sort of way, but what is "normal" anyway?

Years have passed, and I continue to find myself trusting that the gray and rainy days — where I buy roses for myself and let my "guys" make their own choices — will be ones that I look back on with gratitude and fondness because those were in fact, the days where freedom was finally found and guilt vanished for good.

Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.

Oregon provides opportunity to those with disability



JAKE
CORNETT

OTHER VIEWS

Last month, we joined millions of others across the country in celebrating National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month by reflecting on the milestones in our fight for equality that have brought us closer to where we are today.

Twenty-one years ago on March 1, 2000, Fairview Training Center in Salem — the largest institution of its kind in the nation — closed its doors. It housed thousands of individuals with disabilities. Data showed high levels of abuse and neglect. Residents were not permitted to leave unless they were first sterilized. Housing babies, children, adults and the elderly, Fairview was the only mandated service available for individuals and their families.

This change didn't happen overnight. Oregon had been working on closing institutions and building community support systems for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1987.

Fairview's closure created a new challenge — a wait list of more than 7,000 Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities who needed support services to live in their own home or with family or friends and to fully participate

in community life. DRO filed a lawsuit against the state, Staley v. Kitzhaber, asking that any person who was eligible for Medicaid-funded community supports be provided them swiftly.

A decade ago this June, the terms of the Staley settlement were implemented. Today, every individual with an intellectual or developmental disability in Oregon is eligible to receive in-home supports because of the "brokerage" service system the Staley case helped to create.

In closing this shameful chapter in our state's history, Oregon became a pioneer in this facet of the disability rights movement. In 2012, the National Council on Disability highlighted Oregon's success in deinstitutionalization, writing, "Oregon is a national leader in this field."

Since then, Oregon has again been leading the way nationally in creating community jobs for workers who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. The percentage of workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon who work in integrated employment (57%) is nearly three times greater than the national average (20%), according to data released in February, 2020.

The groundwork for this progress was laid in 2012, when workers with disabilities fought back against the idea that it was OK to keep them isolated in "sheltered workshops" and pay them far less than minimum wage. Disability Rights Oregon filed the first U.S. class action

lawsuit (Lane v. Brown) to challenge sheltered workshops that pay subminimum wages. The case settled years later, creating Oregon's robust Employment First program that allows people to find community jobs.

Then, in 2019, Oregon passed legislation to phase out the subminimum wage, putting us at the forefront of ending the subminimum wage. Congress is currently considering the Raise the Wage Act that would end subminimum wage for tipped workers and people with disabilities nationally.

Substantial work remains. School is one of the first places that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities experience segregation and isolation. Today, hundreds of Oregon children don't attend full days of school for months or even years at a time. We're fighting in the courts for children with disabilities to receive the supports they need to attend a full day of school.

It's worth remembering that Oregon was once a place where if you were a person with an intellectual and developmental disability, your destiny was institutional life. Today, Oregon is a dramatically different place. More and more of our friends, family members and neighbors who experience a disability have the opportunity to build the life that they want for themselves.

That's as it should be.

Jake Cornett is the executive director of Disability Rights Oregon.