

What's the big deal about the liver anyway?

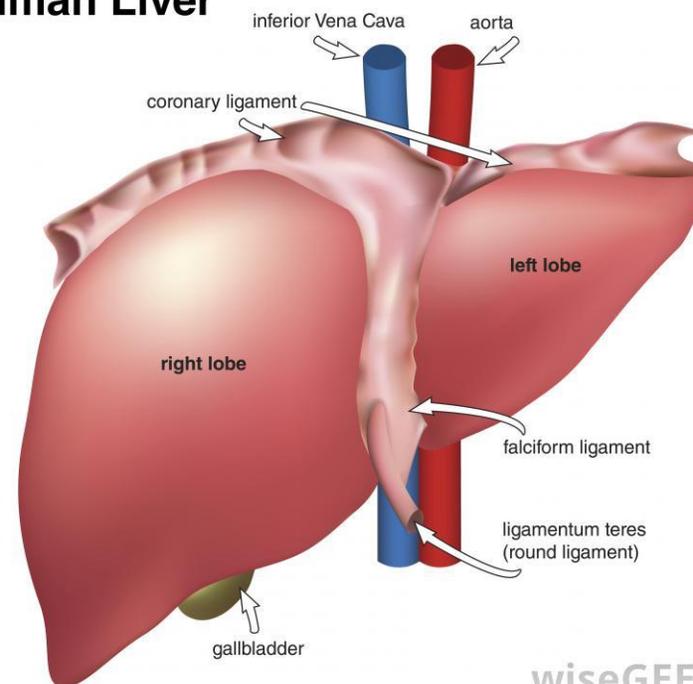
Protect your Liver! Get your Hep B Vaccine!

Why does your healthcare team keep telling you to get Hep B Vaccine?

Hepatitis B is a serious infection that affects the liver. People who are at risk for Hepatitis B infection should be vaccinated.* But the good news is there is a vaccination for Hepatitis B to protect you from this illness. Dialysis patients and staff are at greater risk than the normal population due to their greater chance of exposure to blood.

So what's the big deal about an infection in the liver? The liver, located in the upper right side of the abdomen, is responsible for several functions. It regulates the make-up of blood, controlling the amounts of fats, glucose, and protein that enter the blood stream. The liver helps rid the body of harmful toxins such as drugs and alcohol and it manufactures bile to aid in digestion. It also helps convert nutrients during digestion so that the body can make use of them.

Human Liver



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*CDC Vaccine Information Sheet Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-b.pdf>

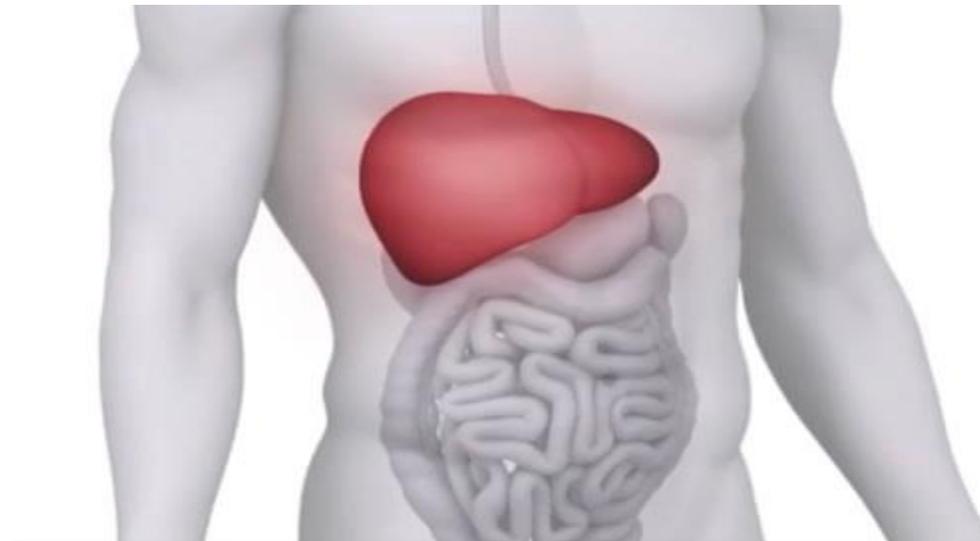
**Information retrieved from <http://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/cirrhosis-liver?page=1>

Another important factor, especially for dialysis patients, is that the liver is responsible for creating clotting factors so that the blood can clot when needed. Clotting is important when your treatment is finished and you are holding your access site.

Hepatitis B can cause short term issues such as tiredness, loss of appetite, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), muscle and joint pain, and diarrhea and vomiting. It can also cause long term issues such as liver cancer and cirrhosis of the liver. What is cirrhosis of the liver? It is a slowly

progressing disease in which scar tissue replaces healthy tissue which prevents the liver from functioning properly. When the liver can't operate properly, it leads to other problems, including debilitating loss of energy, fluid retention, swelling in the ankles, legs, and abdomen, blood in the stool, confusion and personality changes, excessive bleeding and bruising, and increased risk of infection.** These conditions can be deadly! If you thought you only needed to be concerned about your kidneys, think again!

Please ask your dialysis care team about beginning your Hepatitis B vaccination series today, and protect your liver!



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