

Love Your Liver

An Ayurvedic Guide to Fostering Liver Health



As a culture, we seem to be increasingly liver-conscious—ever more aware of the importance of a healthy liver. This attention is well deserved. Without question, the liver is one of our most vital organs—perhaps second only to the lungs and the heart. We can live with just one kidney or a single lung, and we can do without the spleen entirely. But we cannot survive without a functioning liver. Estimates as to the total number of separate functions performed by the liver are in the range of five hundred.¹ The liver is endlessly filtering and detoxifying the blood and it plays a significant role in digestion and metabolism. But the liver also synthesizes protein, produces critically important enzymes and hormones, breaks down and recycles tired blood cells, and regulates glycogen storage. As our primary organ of detoxification, the liver has the important job of protecting the deeper tissues from impurities in the blood that might otherwise cause harm. However, over-exposure to toxins such as alcohol, prescription or recreational drugs, environmental pollutants, and the like, has the potential to adversely impact the liver itself.



Thankfully, the liver possesses a remarkable ability to heal and rejuvenate itself. This is something that sets the liver apart from other organs and tissues. But if we want the liver to repair itself efficiently, we must offer it periodic rest. This resource is intended to provide some practical guidance on how to encourage the overall health and rejuvenation of the liver—both in our daily lives and in more focused periods of cleansing and detoxification. Whether you are currently struggling with low liver energy, or want to act preemptively, this article is for you. After all, loving your liver today has the potential to deeply impact your overall health, well-being, and longevity for years to come.

Key Liver Functions

We've already touched on some of the liver's best known roles, but let's take a moment to understand its broader range of functions—most of which occur quite elegantly in concert with other organs and systems outside of the liver:

Detoxification

As we know, the liver filters the blood and eliminates toxins from the bloodstream. In essence, when we eat, the digestive tract breaks our food down into miniscule, absorbable bits of energy, which are then allowed to enter the bloodstream—*rasa dhatu* (the plasma) to be precise. This nourishing “food juice” then travels to the liver to be further refined and filtered. The liver actually removes and eliminates unwanted toxins so that they do not enter into broader circulation. The liver is also responsible for metabolizing chemical toxins, prescription and recreational drugs, and alcohol.

Bile Formation and Secretion

The Sanskrit word *pitta* means “bile.”² Bile is an alkaline fluid that helps to emulsify fats for proper digestion. It is produced by the liver and temporarily stored in the gallbladder, which hangs at the base of the liver. As food is digested, the gallbladder empties stored bile into the small intestine. As a result, the health of the liver and gallbladder are closely intertwined.

Digestion and Metabolism

The liver plays a critical role in the digestion and metabolism of ingested nutrients. It is able to break down complex substances like carbohydrates, lipids, and proteins into biologically useful molecules like glucose, cholesterol, phospholipids, and lipoproteins.³ The liver also regulates and stores glycogen—our primary source of available biological energy.

Protein Metabolism and Synthesis

The liver is one of the primary places in the body where proteins are metabolized, synthesized, and later degraded. Most of our bodily tissues are made up of proteins, but they are particularly essential for nourishing the muscle tissue. In fact, Ayurveda connects low or weak liver energy to physical weakness in the muscle tissues.⁴



Other Important Liver Functions

The liver is also involved in hormone creation and metabolism, the metabolism and storage of fat, the regulation of bodily pH levels, the generation of red blood cells, and the regulation of blood volume and blood pressure.⁵

Ayurveda and the Liver

As its functions would indicate, the liver is intimately connected to a number of other organs, tissues, and systems throughout the body. Ayurveda provides us with an ancient, yet incredibly relevant perspective on these relationships, which can help us to better understand how to offer meaningful support to the liver.

Ayurveda describes the liver as a fiery, hot organ. Qualitatively speaking, this fact alone signals a close relationship between the liver, *agni* (the fire principle), pitta dosha, and the energy of transformation. According to Ayurveda, the following substances, channels, and energies converge within, or are influenced by, the liver:

Agni

Agni is the sacred metabolic fire within. It has a diverse range of functions, but everywhere in the body, agni serves as a vehicle of transformation. Ayurveda describes at least forty specific physiological manifestations of agni, five of them—the *bhuta agnis*—housed exclusively in the liver. Functionally, the *bhuta agnis* are responsible for transforming our food into biologically useful substances. The digestive process breaks our food down into its most basic form—the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether), and the *bhuta agnis* (one for each element) convert these elements into a form that the body can use. Only this more refined substance is actually made available to the tissues through circulation.

Pitta Dosha and its Subtypes

Pitta is primarily composed of the fire and water elements. It is the source of all heat in the body. Not surprisingly, the liver and the gallbladder are both considered important sites of pitta. Furthermore, the bile ducts empty into the small intestine, which is the primary seat (home) of pitta. Functionally, this flow from the liver and gallbladder into the small intestine expresses an intricate relationship between several different pitta organs, and the flow of pitta itself. A brief exploration of pitta's five subtypes sheds further light on the connection between pitta, the liver, and the gallbladder.

Pachaka Pitta

Pachaka pitta is located in the small intestine and the stomach. Its primary function is the digestion, absorption, and assimilation of foods. *Pachaka pitta* works in close coordination with—is even considered part of—*jathara agni* (the central digestive fire), which regulates agni throughout the body. *Pachaka pitta* embodies the energy of fire, heat, and transformation, and is intricately connected to the digestive function of the liver.



Ranjaka Pitta

Ranjaka pitta is located chiefly in the liver and the spleen, but to some degree in the stomach as well. Of all the subtypes of pitta, ranjaka pitta is most closely related to the liver. The Sanskrit word *ranjaka* means, “to give color.” Ranjaka pitta gives color to the blood and to all tissues throughout the body (it even influences skin, hair, and eye color). Ranjaka pitta also produces bile and liver enzymes and governs the transformation of *rasa dhatu* (plasma) into *rakta dhatu* (red blood cells).

Alochaka Pitta

Alochaka pitta is located in the eyes and is necessary for visual perception. It makes possible the perception of both light and color. Alochaka pitta also oversees the luster, color, and translucence of the eyes themselves. Interestingly, there is a very significant relationship between alochaka pitta in the eyes and ranjaka pitta in the liver, meaning that there is a direct connection between the eyes and the liver. Disorders in the liver may cause the sclera of the eye to turn yellow. Similarly, toxicity in the liver can cause visual disturbances or hypersensitivity to light.⁶

Bhrajaka Pitta

Bhrajaka pitta is located in the skin. Its primary functions include the maintenance of skin color, texture, temperature, and moisture. This means that our complexion and the luster of our skin is primarily a function of bhrajaka pitta. This subtype also facilitates the digestion and processing of any substances that are applied to, or absorbed through, the skin. As with the eyes, there is a relationship between the skin and the liver, so any number of skin conditions can be traced back to disorders in the liver.

Sadhaka Pitta

Sadhaka pitta is located in the brain and in the heart. It is responsible for conscious thinking and emotions. Disturbances in ranjaka pitta (located in the liver) can very much affect our state of mind. There is also a powerful connection between certain **emotions and the liver** (which we will explore shortly), reflecting the link between the liver and sadhaka pitta.

Rakta Dhatu

Here in the West, we are accustomed to thinking about the blood as a single entity, but Ayurveda separates the blood into two distinct tissues. This is not because these two tissues are physically separate, but because they have very different functions in the body, and striking qualitative differences as well. *Rasa dhatu* (the plasma) is a cooling, nourishing substance associated with feminine and lunar energies. It delivers nutrition to cells throughout the body, and is considered cool, slow, and soothing—like kapha. *Rakta dhatu* (made up of red blood cells) is the oxygen-carrying portion of the blood, which is associated with masculine and solar energies, and with pitta dosha. It is considered hot, sharp, and penetrating.



Qualitatively, rakta dhatu, pitta dosha, and the liver are quite similar, and there is a strong functional relationship between all three. In fact, the liver is the *mula* (root) of *rakta vaha srotas* (the channel system associated with this oxygen-carrying portion of the blood) and, in the early stages of embryonic development, the liver is almost solely responsible for the creation of red blood cells—until that role gradually shifts to the bone marrow.⁷ It is also significant that one of the byproducts of rakta dhatu is bile (*poshaka pitta*), which is essential to the lipid metabolism carried out by the liver.⁸

Emotions Seated in the Liver

Just as the liver is critical to the digestion of food and nutrition, it plays an important role in the digestion of emotions—particularly those that are closely aligned with the liver. The liver is considered the seat of anger, hate, and resentment. It is also tied to feelings of envy, irritability, frustration, impatience, and excessive ambition. Not surprisingly, all of these fiery emotions are imbalanced expressions of pitta dosha. But the liver is associated with the healthier expressions of pitta as well: will power, courage, confidence, contentment, satisfaction, enthusiasm, cooperation, acceptance, and surrender. You can learn a lot about the health of your liver by the flavor of emotions you encounter on a regular basis. It is also telling to notice how well you are able to respond to, and move through, the more challenging range of these emotions. Do they quickly and completely overpower you? Are you able to fully release them after some time? Or are you someone who can harbor anger and resentment for years on end? If the liver is impaired, it can be harder to process and release these emotions. Similarly, pent up anger and resentment can undoubtedly damage the liver.

Like Increases Like

As we have seen, the liver has close ties to agni and to almost every aspect of pitta dosha. As a result, the liver is very susceptible to excess heat, and aggravated pitta is quite frequently either the cause—or the result—of any given liver imbalance. This is not to say that vata and kapha are never involved in liver imbalances. They certainly can be. But because the liver is such a hot, fiery organ, even vata and kapha types of liver imbalances tend to aggravate pitta, causing it to stagnate and accumulate in the abdomen. Even pitta disorders elsewhere in the digestive tract (like peptic ulcers or hyperacidity) are typically rooted in impaired liver and gallbladder functioning.⁹ Pitta imbalances are classically hot and inflammatory in nature. So keeping an eye out for these types of imbalances, and addressing them early on, naturally helps to protect the health of the liver and gallbladder.

Optimal Timing

While there are several appropriate times of year to cleanse and detox the liver, spring is perhaps the most potent. This is because we often eat heavier, richer, more nourishing foods during the fall and winter months. These foods are more taxing for the liver, whereas the lighter fare we tend to crave come spring is naturally cooling and cleansing for the liver. Spring is also a perfect season to clear any accumulating heat prior to the onset of the summer season. Then, throughout the summer—because the summer heat can be particularly hard on the liver—it is important to watch for increased heat in the system, and to clear it whenever necessary.





General Support for the Liver

Even though the liver serves as our primary organ of detoxification, and would seem to be susceptible to accumulating toxicity over time, it has a remarkable built-in capacity for rejuvenation. In fact, the liver is the only human organ that can naturally regenerate lost tissue. As little as twenty-five percent of a liver (e.g., in a liver transplant) can regrow into a full-sized, healthy, functioning liver.¹⁰ Promoting liver health is largely about giving the organ a periodic break—slowing the barrage of taxing inputs and allowing the liver to rest and reset. This approach is very similar to the philosophy behind a more general cleanse, which can be a terrific means of supporting liver health. We will also explore more general pitta-pacifying and blood-cleansing therapies that can help to support the liver.

The good news is that the liver knows how to heal itself; we just have to offer it the proper support. So whether you are operating proactively, working to balance existing symptoms of liver imbalance, or wanting to rectify choices that may have over-taxed your liver in the past, the following strategies are intended to bolster the natural functioning of the liver.



Cleansing

Done correctly, a cleanse strengthens agni throughout the system and helps to eliminate the very toxicity that might otherwise inhibit our overall health. Cleansing initiates a powerful process of renewal and healing at many levels. It is an especially potent therapy for the liver because it affords the entire body a period of profound rest and detoxification. An Ayurvedic cleanse employs diet and lifestyle therapies to draw toxins (and excess vata, pitta, and kapha) out of the tissues and into the digestive tract so that they can be eliminated. While this is sometimes an uncomfortable process, the end result of a cleanse should be a renewed level of vitality and an improved sense of balance.

Even within the Ayurvedic tradition, there are many different ways to go about cleansing. The overall structure, length, intensity, and depth can and should be adapted according to each individual's **constitution**, **current state of balance**, level of strength, and age—and should also take into consideration various environmental and seasonal influences.

Our **Cleansing Department** offers a smorgasbord of cleansing options so that you can choose the approach that best aligns with your personal needs, lifestyle, and available time. The following cleanses are among the options you will find discussed there:

- **One-Day Digestive Reset**
- **Simplified Three-Day Cleanse**
- **Traditional Ayurvedic Cleanse** (Flexible Timeframe: 3-21 days)
- Pancha Karma (Ayurveda's Signature Cleanse)

Whatever cleanse is right for you, working with an Ayurvedic practitioner during a cleanse can provide an invaluable level of personalized support, amplifying the benefits of the process.

A Note on Liver Flushes

Liver “flushes” have become quite popular in recent years. These practices generally rely on malic acid from apple juice or apple cider vinegar to soften liver stones and gallstones so that they can be eliminated when the liver and gallbladder are forcibly purged. This practice is not Ayurvedic, per se, and is certainly beyond the scope of this article. In general, Ayurveda favors gentle cleansing techniques, and its more aggressive cleansing therapies are performed only after taking great care to properly prepare the body. Therefore, Ayurveda would typically employ purgative herbs to accomplish a similar outcome over a longer stretch of time.

Supportive Fluids

Overly viscous blood is harder to filter and detoxify, so staying hydrated is critical to liver health. Some fluids are particularly supportive of the liver.



Lemon Water

Drinking warm lemon water first thing in the morning kindles and protects agni and helps to clear the digestive tract of *ama* (toxins) that may have accumulated overnight. Despite its citric and ascorbic acid content, once metabolized, lemon water is also very alkalizing, and can therefore serve to pacify accumulated pitta and to purify and cleanse the blood. Further, lemon water is a robust source of anti-oxidants, is considered a liver stimulant, and helps to encourage liver detox while supporting bile output.

Morning Lemon Water

Ingredients:

- ½ fresh lemon (including the peel)
- 2 cups filtered cold water
- 2 cups hot water (recently boiled, or similar temperature)



Upon waking, combine the two cups of water, squeeze the fresh juice into the water and drop in the rind. Let sit for a few minutes and drink 2 to 4 cups on an empty stomach (you can continue to sip on what's leftover throughout the day). Allow about 20 minutes before eating. Note: this ratio of hot to cold water is a good guideline for the temperature, but it can be adjusted to meet your individual temperature preference.

“Blue” Water

Certain wavelengths of light, and therefore specific colors, can have a profoundly soothing effect on our systems. One way to settle pitta systemically, and particularly in the liver is to ingest water that has been infused with cooling blue light. Begin by filling a clear glass jar or bottle with purified water. Cover the jar with some blue cellophane (usually available at art supply stores). Place the container in the sun for a couple of hours so that the water receives an infusion of blue light. Drink 1 to 3 cups of this water per day.¹¹ This practice can have a remarkably cooling effect on both the blood and the liver.

Supportive Diet

Because the liver is so directly involved in the digestive process and because one of its primary jobs is to filter and eliminate any toxins that we ingest, our diets inevitably have a profound effect on the health of the liver. The following practices will help to protect and rejuvenate the liver.



Pitta-Pacifying Diet for the Liver

Because pitta is so closely tied to the liver, a pitta-pacifying diet is generally going to support liver health and cleansing—particularly during the hotter months of the year. In general, pitta thrives on a diet that is mild, even cooling (as opposed to spicy), nourishing, and somewhat dry. Emphasize the sweet, bitter, and astringent tastes, while minimizing the salty, sour, and pungent (spicy) tastes. The bitter taste is especially supportive of the liver because it is cooling and cleansing in nature. If your digestive patterns tend toward excess pitta, you will likely also find raw vegetables and green vegetable juices particularly strengthening for the liver.¹² Avoiding any additional toxicity from recreational or prescription drugs, alcohol, or tobacco will also be supportive.

In order to truly rest the liver, it is best to minimize your intake of refined sugars, oils, and fats—which are the primary foods that the liver is directly responsible for metabolizing. Ghee is the easiest fat for the liver to digest and it also helps to restore enzymatic function.¹³ During a liver detox, favor ghee over other oils and fats, but still use it sparingly. In addition, favor cooling, pitta-pacifying spices and garnishes such as [ground coriander](#), fresh cilantro, [fennel](#), [cumin](#), [turmeric](#), mint, and lemon or lime juice in your meals. For more information, please see our resource on a [pitta-pacifying diet](#) and on [pitta-pacifying foods](#).

Foods that Strengthen the Liver

If you want to take your efforts one step further, there are a number of foods that more specifically strengthen and support the liver. These include bitter greens like kale, beet greens, collard greens, dandelion greens, nettles, and comfrey leaf. Green vegetables that have a lot of chlorophyll in them are also generally helpful, as are beets, carrots, and apples. Organic sesame oil, olive oil, and avocado oil can help to rejuvenate the liver, but are most effective when introduced after liver function has been restored and oils and fats are being digested well.¹⁴



Lifestyle for the Liver

Because of the close relationship between pitta and the liver, general pitta-pacifying measures that help to clear the accumulation of heat from the physical and emotional fields can provide fairly meaningful support for the liver. This is particularly true during pitta season, which includes the late spring and summer months. Keep in mind that those with pitta constitutions and imbalances often tend to exhibit a striking disregard for the needs of their bodies—in favor of accomplishing their goals. If you recognize this pattern as one of your own, the antidote to this type of behavior is to listen to, and deeply honor, your body's needs on a day-to-day basis. The following lifestyle strategies will help to keep pitta cool and calm throughout the system, thereby supporting the liver. You'll find more ideas in our resource on [Balancing Pitta](#) and in our [Summer Season Guide](#).

A Sense of Routine

Pitta thrives with a sense of routine, so sticking to a more predictable schedule can help to keep your mind and body both cool and grounded. In particular, try sticking to consistent meal times, rising with—or even before—the sun, and retiring relatively early (ideally by 10 p.m.). If you're entirely new to creating an Ayurvedic routine, you'll find more extensive guidance in our [Daily Routine Department](#).

Staying Cool

Pitta is generally fairly intolerant of prolonged sun exposure, so it is best to avoid being in the sun during the heat of the day and to favor being outdoors in the morning and evening rather than mid-day. When you are outdoors, shield your body from undue sun exposure by wearing lightweight, loose fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible. The head and the eyes are particularly sensitive to light and heat, so be sure to wear a sun hat and sunglasses. During the hottest months, you can also reduce the water temperature in your shower or bath and cool the energetic body by applying some cooling essential oils (like khus or jasmine) to the crown of the head, and to the six other chakra points.¹⁵ Dressing in, and exposing yourself to, an abundance of cooling colors (greens, blues, purples, and whites) will also help to pacify pitta systemically.

Pitta-Pacifying Exercise

Exercise increases heat and, done incorrectly, can easily provoke both pitta and the liver. Pitta is very active in the atmosphere at mid-day, from about 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., which also tends to be the hottest time of day. Mid-day is therefore not an optimal time of day to exercise. Exercise in the early morning or evening, from about 6–10 a.m. or p.m. is far more supportive. To guard against accumulating heat, it is also important to engage in a pitta-pacifying exercise regimen that is moderate rather than overly vigorous. Activities such as walking, hiking, swimming, cycling, and yoga—all done with relaxed effort—are best for keeping pitta balanced.



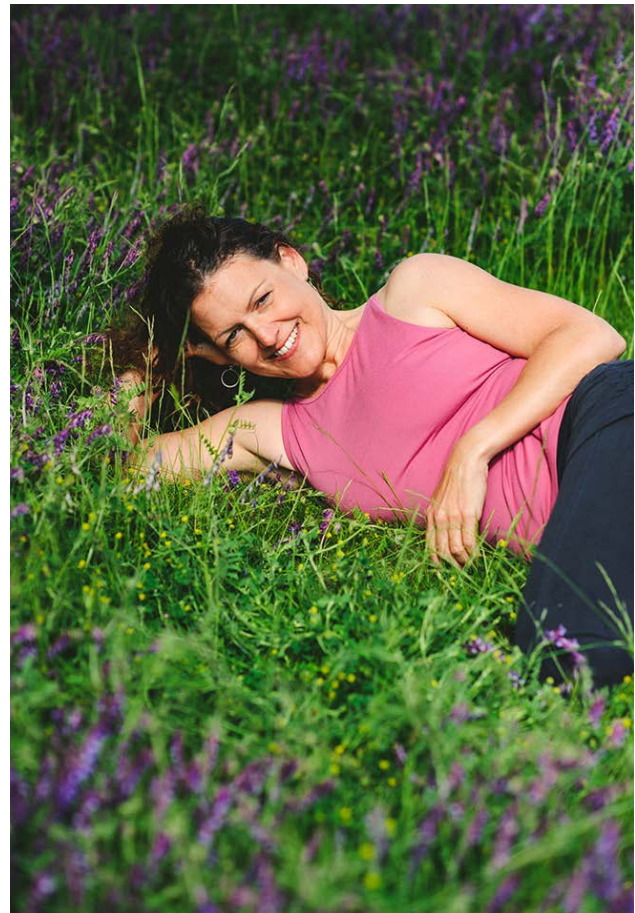
Tending to the Mind-Body Connection

Ayurveda views the mind, body, and spirit as integrated parts of an inseparable whole. Therefore, physical support for the liver is far more meaningful when we are simultaneously tending to the full spectrum of influences that can affect liver health—including our emotions and our overall state of mind. Below are some specific strategies that offer a more subtle level of support to the liver.

Emotional Hygiene

A candid look at the full range of emotional influences in your mind-body ecology can be hugely supportive of liver health. As we have seen, the liver is a hot, fiery organ that shares an affinity with a number of volatile emotions (e.g., anger, envy, irritability)—which our culture tends to judge rather harshly. As a result, many of us have been conditioned to think that these emotions are somehow unacceptable, and have become quite skillful at suppressing them. This can lead to emotional stagnation and the accumulation of emotional ama (toxicity), which is never healthy. The toxic residues of unresolved anger, resentment, and frustration can harm any number of tissues, but are particularly likely to impact the liver. Overactive or underdeveloped capacities for will power, courage, confidence, enthusiasm, contentment, and surrender can also affect the liver. Finding ways to keep all of these emotional energies in balance and flowing is critical to liver health.

It is important to feel and acknowledge all of your emotions in order to ensure their complete release. One of the best ways to do this is to become a passive observer and to allow yourself to witness whatever emotions are arising in each moment. You may also want to consider addressing any stagnant energies from your past that might need attention and resolution. In particular, the practice of actively surrendering the personal will (located in the solar plexus) to the higher, creative or spiritual will (located in the heart center) can help to keep the solar plexus energetically clear.¹⁶ A sacred fire ceremony with a ghee lamp or an agni hotra kit can also be quite powerful; simply offer your unresolved emotions to the fire and ask that they be transmuted and placed in service of the highest good.



Meditation, Pranayama, and Yoga

A regular practice to cool and quiet the mind can be instrumental in promoting health throughout the mind-body organism, and can be especially supportive of an emotional hot-spot like the liver. Even a ten to fifteen minute daily practice can be transformative. **Empty Bowl Meditation** is a simple, and beautiful practice suitable to most anyone. **Nadi Shodhana pranayama** is incredibly calming, grounding, soothing to the mind, the nervous system, and effectively balances vata, pitta, and kapha. If lingering heat is at the root of your particular imbalances, **Sheetali pranayama** is extremely cooling and is wonderfully supportive of the liver. If movement is more appealing for you, **pitta-pacifying yoga** focuses on a moderate pace, an attitude of surrender, and emphasizes grounding, twisting, forward folds, and freedom of movement in the postures. **Moon Salutations** offer a simple, introductory pitta-pacifying flow.

Ayurvedic Self-Massage

The practice of *abhyanga* (self-massage with oil) is deeply detoxifying to both superficial and deep tissues. It settles the nervous system, calms and nourishes the skin, promotes healthy circulation, helps to lubricate and rejuvenate all of the tissue, and supports cleansing and detoxification throughout the system, thereby supporting the liver. On a more subtle level, this practice strengthens the emotional, energetic, and spiritual aspects of our consciousness; it creates an insulating and protective barrier around the body, helping to shield us from any disruptive energies that we may encounter throughout the day. Abhyanga also supports the liver by very effectively reducing stress and helping to clear emotional disturbances.

Moon Bathing

Whenever there is overactive heat or excess pitta in the body, moon bathing is extremely cooling and soothing. Simply make a point of being outdoors and exposed to moonlight after the sun has set. This practice is particularly powerful on a full moon, when the sunset and moonrise are the most closely aligned.

Herbal Support

Many herbs in the Ayurvedic pharmacopeia are very effective at pacifying pitta, clearing accumulated heat, cleansing the blood, encouraging the flow of bile, and detoxifying the liver. Not surprisingly, most of these herbs are primarily bitter in taste. Ghee and aloe vera gel are often used as *anupans* (carriers) to deliver liver-cleansing herbs.¹⁷ The following herbs and formulas are worth considering for liver support:

Liver Formula

Liver Formula tablets help to detoxify and rejuvenate the liver by delivering a powerful combination of cleansing, bitter, pitta-pacifying herbs. This formula is very supportive of overall liver health, and can also be helpful if your lifestyle habits may have taxed your liver over the years.



Blood Cleanse

For a reset in the bloodstream itself, try [Blood Cleanse tablets](#)—a formula combining several potent Ayurvedic blood-purifying herbs. This formula has a natural inclination toward the lymph, the blood, and the liver, and can help to eliminate excess heat and natural toxins from these organs and tissues.

Bhumyamalaki

[Bhumyamalaki](#) is the classic Ayurvedic herb for liver support. Not only does it have a particular affinity for the liver, but it is very dry, light, bitter, cooling, soothing, and cleansing—making it deeply pacifying to both pitta and kapha, and supportive when there is excess heat in the digestive tract in general. Its action helps to cleanse, detoxify, and strengthen both the liver and the gallbladder.

Kutki

[Kutki](#) has a deeply cleansing action on both the liver and the gallbladder, supporting healthy liver function and the proper flow of bile. Kutki is also very supportive of the spleen. This herb balances both pitta and kapha, and supports proper immune function systemically. Because it has been severely over-harvested, Banyan sources only sustainably cultivated kutki.

Turmeric

Turmeric has a strong affinity for the blood, the skin, the digestive system, and the liver. It has a deeply clarifying and detoxifying effect on the entire system, but offers particular support to these organs and tissues. [Turmeric powder](#) can be cooked into food, taken alone, or if you prefer, [Turmeric tablets](#) and [Turmeric liquid extract](#) are also available.

Guduchi

[Guduchi](#) is renowned for boosting the immune system while purifying the blood, kidneys, and liver. It is also highly effective at cooling, calming, and soothing overactive pitta.

Triphala or Amalaki

[Triphala](#) is revered for its unique ability to gently cleanse, detoxify, and tone the digestive tract, while replenishing, nourishing, and rejuvenating the tissues. It encourages balanced agni throughout the system, helps to eliminate ama, supports *ojas*, and therefore lends strength to the entire system. However, during the summer season, especially in cases of high pitta or excess heat, it often makes sense to switch to [Amalaki](#)—one of the three ingredients in triphala—because it is particularly pitta-pacifying and helps to eliminate excess heat from the digestive tract. To cleanse the digestive tract, these herbs are typically taken about half an hour before bed. Take one to two [Triphala tablets](#) or [Amalaki tablets](#) with warm water. Or if you prefer, either powdered herb can be prepared as a tea. Simply add ½ teaspoon [Triphala powder](#) or [Amalaki powder](#) to a cup of freshly boiled water, steep for about 10 minutes, cool, and drink. [Triphala liquid extract](#) and [Amalaki liquid extract](#) are also available.

Chyavanprash

[Chyavanprash](#) is a traditional Ayurvedic herbal jam made in a base of amalaki fruit. This balancing formula kindles agni, helps to buffer the body against stress, bolsters the immune system, and is extremely pitta-pacifying. It can help to foster clarity and health in the blood, the liver, and the digestive tract. Take 1–2 teaspoons daily, or use as directed by your health practitioner.



Aloe Vera Gel

Aloe vera gel is profoundly cooling, and has a particular affinity for balancing excess pitta—both internally and externally. Aloe vera gel has long been revered for its capacity to rejuvenate and support natural healing in the digestive tract, particularly when there is excess heat or pitta provocation. For the liver, take about 2 tablespoons of gel before meals two or three times per day, or as directed by your healthcare practitioner. Aloe vera gel is also a good carrier for herbs aimed at supporting the liver and the digestive tract.

Herbs for the Mind

The following herbs are particularly supportive of the mind and emotional spheres, so if calming the mind and the emotional field is a primary focus for you in promoting liver health, these herbs are worth considering.

Brahmi/Gotu Kola

[Brahmi/Gotu Kola](#) is tridoshic, incredibly sattvic in nature, and is renowned for its ability to support both the nervous system and the mind. This herb very effectively cools pitta throughout the system. It also has a strong affinity for the skin and the digestive tract, which are both closely tied to liver health. Brahmi/Gotu Kola is also available as a [liquid extract](#).

Bhringaraj

[Bhringaraj](#) is one of the best herbs for the head and is particularly adept at balancing and rejuvenating pitta dosha. It very effectively calms the mind, bolsters memory, benefits the lungs, and supports healthy eyes and ears. It is also an excellent liver cleanser.

Additional Resources

Keep in mind that liver imbalances do not develop in a vacuum. They occur only within the larger context of who we are—body, mind, and spirit. If you feel inspired to study the bigger picture, we have a number of other resources and articles that may further inform your journey towards optimal health. The following resources are particularly relevant to the topic of liver health:

[The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#) introduces the concept of agni and offers an in-depth exploration of the importance of tending to yours.

Our [Guide to Healthy Elimination](#) is relevant due to the natural connection between the liver and overall digestive health, which of course, is reflected in the quality of our elimination.

[Building a Healthy Immune System](#) can inform a natural approach to bolstering overall immune health.

[An Ayurvedic Guide to Stress Management](#) explores fantastic tools for reducing stress and for changing our relationship with stressful situations. If stress is a predominant force in your life, this resource might very well support your healing process.



Our [Cleansing Department](#) offers a diverse array of cleansing techniques and detailed instructions on how to do a home cleanse at a time that is right for you.

Our [Summer Season Guide](#) suggests a number of strategies for staying cool—both mind and body—and pacifying pitta during the hotter months.

Your Unique Flavor of Liver Support

Remember, one of the primary tenants of Ayurveda is that we should treat individuals—not their symptoms. Promoting liver health is no different. While the above suggestions are aimed at supporting the overall health and functioning of the liver, each of us has a different constellation of factors to consider—our [constitution](#), our [current state of balance](#), our age, our environment, our *khavaigunyas* (personal weaknesses), and the season, to mention a few. This is where working with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner can be invaluable. Rather than sifting through a long list of possible remedies, you can focus on those that would most deeply serve your system in particular. Even if you are navigating an Ayurvedic lifestyle on your own, it is critical to understand that who you are is a far more important consideration than the particular ailments you may be trying to correct. This is your adventure. Chances are that the therapeutic strategies that most resonate with you will have a particularly potent impact on your state of balance. So listen to your body, your heart, and your intuition. Trust your gut. Follow your inspiration. Keep it simple. Go slow. And most importantly, enjoy the process. We sincerely hope that we can continue to support you on your path to vibrant health.



References

- ¹ "Liver," Wikipedia, last modified May 3, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liver>.
- ² David Frawley, *Ayurvedic Healing: A Comprehensive Guide* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997), 141.
- ³ Jessie Szalay, "Liver: Function, Failure, and Disease," LiveScience, February 19, 2015, <http://www.livescience.com/44859-liver.html>.
- ⁴ Vasant Lad, *Textbook of Ayurveda Volume 1: Fundamental Principles of Ayurveda* (Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2002), 96.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 94-6.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.
- ⁷ "Liver," Wikipedia, last modified May 3, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liver>.
- ⁸ Lad, *Textbook 1: Fundamental Principles*, 116.
- ⁹ Frawley, *Ayurvedic Healing*, 141.
- ¹⁰ "Liver," Wikipedia, last modified May 3, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liver>.
- ¹¹ Vasant Lad, *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 114.
- ¹² Frawley, *Ayurvedic Healing*, 142.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.
- ¹⁵ Vasant Lad, *Textbook of Ayurveda Volume 3: General Principles of Management and Treatment* (Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2012), 116-118.
- ¹⁶ Frawley, *Ayurvedic Healing*, 141.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

