The gallbladder is a mysterious organ, and its purpose is one that many people don’t really understand. Gallbladder surgery is one of the most common surgeries performed in the US. Many of these surgeries could be avoided by properly nourishing this vital organ. We wanted to write a blog specific to this special organ because we DO need it, every single time we eat.

The gallbladder is a pear-shaped muscular organ that sits right next to the liver. It is a storage tank for bile. Bile is made in the liver by liver cells and is sent through tiny ducts or canals to the small intestine and to the gallbladder. The gallbladder stores bile to have it available in larger quantities for secretion when a meal is eaten. The ingestion of food, especially fats, causes the release of a hormone, cholecystokinin (CCK), which in turn signals the relaxation of the valve in the gallbladder and allows the bile to enter the small intestine. It also signals the contraction of the gallbladder which squirts the concentrated liquid bile into the small intestine where its job is to emulsify or break down fat.

Bile is composed of cholic acid, which has the ability to react and break down both water and fat molecules, thus creating the emulsification process. After breaking down the fats into smaller pieces, the pancreatic enzyme lipase can act more efficiently due to the larger surface area of the fat. Bile also acts as a key factor in the absorption process of fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D, E, and K.

Proper fat digestion relies on several factors such as healthy bile production from the liver. The symphony of a healthy-functioning gallbladder, bile flow, pancreatic function, and hormone balance all contribute to a healthy functioning liver, gallbladder, and system overall.

The interaction between the liver and gallbladder is significant. Not only does the liver produce the bile needed for the breaking down of fats, but this bile is a very powerful antioxidant which helps to remove toxins from the liver. In a sense, it is a “give-give” relationship. The liver filters toxins (bacteria, viruses, drugs, and other foreign substances the body doesn’t want) and sends them out via the bile. The pathway of departure is from the liver through the bile ducts and into the gallbladder or directly into the small intestine, where it joins waste matter and leaves through the colon with the feces. A healthy liver produces about 1-1 ½ quarts of bile daily. If you have gallbladder problems, you would do well to consistently cleanse your liver and your entire GI tract. We love colonics and coffee enemas for this reason. A common symptom of a sluggish gallbladder is constipation.

So what are the most effective ways to promote gallbladder health? Diet, diet, and diet. See below for things to avoid and things to consume to support this organ.

**Things to reduce or avoid for gallbladder health:**
- Reduce sodium.
- Reduce cholesterol-rich foods such as red meats, dairy products, and eggs.
- Reduce foods known to be common allergens such as gluten-containing grains, soy products, corn, and peanuts.
- Avoid large meals especially before bedtime. Try not to eat within three hours before bedtime.
- Avoid hydrogenated fats and oils.

**Tips for supporting the liver and gallbladder:**
- Eat foods that promote bile formation such as raw shredded beets, organic apples, and ginger.
- Eat bitter foods such as dandelion greens and other dark leafy greens. Bitters stimulate the flow of bile in the gallbladder, thereby helping us digest fats. Try adding them in salads or even eating a few leaves while preparing meals so that the bile is ready to emulsify whatever fat you consume.
- Take fish oil capsules. They contain omega-3 oils which are known to block cholesterol formation in bile.
- Eat foods rich in vitamin C such as papaya, red bell peppers, strawberries, oranges, and lemons.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of mineralized water a day. We recommend 1 liter per 50 pounds of body weight.
- Support the pancreas by stabilizing blood sugar.
- Increase antioxidants: raw cacao, açai berries, blueberries, prunes, pomegranates, kale, brussel sprouts, beets, and red bell peppers.
- Eat foods high in minerals (copper, zinc, selenium and potassium) such as: squash, avocados, shellfish, and spinach.
• Eat foods rich in pyridoxal, folate, and cobalamin. These are three effective nutrients that support the liver’s biochemical pathways. (see below):
  • Pyridoxal-rich foods: potatoes, bananas, garbanzo beans, and chicken breast.
  • Folate-rich roods: beef liver, spinach, and asparagus.
  • Cobalamin-rich foods: trout, salmon, beef, clams, and oysters.
• Manage your stress with breathing, yoga, and regular exercise.

**The Liver Tincture**
This is a powerful detoxing combination of herbs that purifies the blood, contains high antioxidant values, nourishes and aids in rebuilding the liver, helps to level the hormones, and stimulates the digestive system. You can purchase the following herbs formulated for this *special liver tincture* online.

**Herbs**
Indian gooseberry/amalaki
turmeric
ginger
dandelion leaf
licorice root
burdock root
milk thistle seed
hawthorn berries
ginseng root
astragalus root
St. John’s Wort

**Directions:**
Fill a clean glass canning jar ⅓ full with the dried herbs. Add vodka up to one inch from the top. Screw the lid on tightly and store in a cool, dark place. Shake 3-7 times a week. The tincture needs to sit for at least 2-6 weeks. Strain tincture and pour into a colored glass bottle; close the lid tightly. Alcohol tinctures will last 2-3 years. Tinctures need to be kept in a cool, dark place such as a cabinet. (Why use vodka? Water rolls off the liver, but alcohol goes straight to it and takes the herbs with it.)

To support and regenerate the liver, take one dropperful (½ teaspoon) 3 times a day for 3 to 6 months.

**Liver and gallbladder cleansing juice recipe**

3 kale leaves
1 handful dandelion greens
3 stalks celery
1 handful parsley
1 large beet
1 one-once section of ginger (peeled)
2 green apples
1 cucumber
2 lemons