

Wellness Advocate

Get ORGANized!

A Guide to Keeping Your Major Organs Healthy

Our bodies are made of thousands of intricate parts that allow us to live energetic, productive lives. In this article, we focus on five major organs: the brain, the heart, the liver, the lungs and the kidneys. These major players direct and power the rest of a very complicated system. Read on for some quick tips on keeping them healthy!

BRAIN

Your brain (obviously!) controls all of the other organs and systems in your body. From a philosophical point of view, what makes the brain special in comparison to other organs, is that it forms the physical structure associated with the mind. Hippocrates, the father of medicine had this to say about the brain: "We ought to know that from nothing else but the brain come joys, delights, laughter and sports, as well as sorrow and grief."

 Quick Tip

Physical exercise is essential for maintaining good blood flow to the brain and encourages the growth of new brain cells. Challenge yourself to do more strenuous workouts for the greatest benefit! (*Always check with your doctor before beginning a new exercise routine.*)

HEART

The heart is the central hub for the transport of blood to your body. Every organ, tissue and cell in the body relies heavily on the blood flow produced by a heart working at its full capacity. An under-producing heart means a reduction in the transport of oxygen and nutrients to the organs of the body and a reduction in getting wastes, toxins and carbon dioxide out of the body.

According to recent research from the Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, practicing yoga positively affects your overall heart health, including your heart rate variability (HRV), an indicator of heart health in recent research.

 Quick Tip

LIVER

The liver's main job is to filter the blood coming from the digestive tract, before passing it to the rest of the body. It also detoxifies chemicals and metabolizes medications, among many other things.

 Quick Tip

Don't take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) with alcohol. It can be hazardous to your liver cells.

LUNGS

The lungs are different from most of the other organs in your body because their delicate tissues are directly connected to the outside environment. Anything you breathe in can affect your lungs. Germs, tobacco smoke and other harmful substances can cause damage to your airways and threaten the lung's ability to work properly.

 Quick Tip

Don't Smoke. Cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and many other diseases. Cigarette smoke can narrow the air passages and make breathing more difficult. It causes chronic inflammation (or swelling) in the lungs. This can lead to chronic bronchitis. Over time, cigarette smoke destroys lung tissue, and may trigger changes that grow into cancer. If you smoke and are ready to quit, HealthSmart can help. [Click here to get started!](#)

KIDNEYS

Our kidneys flush out toxins, filter blood and produce three hormones: one to keep your blood pressure under control, one that stimulates the growth of red blood cells and one that helps to maintain strong bones.

Using pain relievers such as Advil or Tylenol on a regular basis can damage your kidneys. Turmeric is an excellent natural pain reliever. There are several great brands, including Curamin (Terry Naturals) and Turmeric Force (New Chapter).

 Quick Tip

IN SUMMARY

We hope our "Quick Tips" have provided you with some useful ideas you can incorporate into your personal wellness plan. But the bottom line is that plenty of exercise and eating a variety of low-fat, healthy foods is essential to the optimal function of your major organs and your entire body.

Did you know?

HealthSmart has an outstanding Exercise and Nutrition Program with proven results.

[Click here to learn more—and stay organized!](#)

Focus on *Alternative* Treatments

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a healing system developed in China more than 2,000 years ago. In addition to treating illness, TCM focuses on strengthening the body's defenses and enhancing its capacity for healing and to maintain health.

TCM looks at how the human body interacts with all aspects of life and the environment, including the seasons, weather, time of day, our diet and emotional states. It sees the key to health as the harmonious and balanced functioning of body, mind and spirit; the balance of health depends on the unobstructed flow of qi (pronounced chee) or "life energy" through the body, along pathways known as meridians. TCM practitioners see disease as the result of disruptions in the circulation of qi.

In the West, the most familiar TCM treatment method is acupuncture. Studies in the U.S. indicate that acupuncture can help relieve chronic low back pain, dental pain, migraine headaches, fibromyalgia and symptoms of osteoarthritis. It can assist in the treatment of emotional pain syndromes such as post-traumatic stress disorder, and used in conjunction with in-vitro fertilization can help achieve pregnancy. Other TCM treatments include acupressure, herbal therapy and the concept of food as medicine.

Most states license acupuncturists, but not all of them include the other components of TCM. Look for someone who is skilled in a range of TCM therapies, not just acupuncture. The federally recognized Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) accredits schools and colleges that teach TCM. About one-third of the states that license acupuncturists require graduation from an ACAOM-accredited school. The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (www.nccaom.org) maintains a database of nationally certified practitioners.



Recipe: *Za'atar Chicken*

Za'atar is a special combination of dried herbs, lemon juice and sesame seeds used as a marinade rub. This easy, yet exotic blend can turn an ordinary chicken breast into an inspired dinner. Sesame seeds add a little fiber, iron, magnesium and heart-healthy fats. Chicken is a good, lean protein source and an excellent canvas for trying out different herbs and spices. Pair with a leafy green salad for a delicious meal.

PREPARATION

- 1 Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
- 2 For the za'atar, set cast iron or other heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add sesame seeds to dry, hot pan. Lift pan and hold it just above burner, moving it to swirl seeds until they start popping and color lightly, 2-3 minutes. Immediately spread toasted seeds on a plate to cool. Place fully cooled sesame seeds in a mortar and pestle and crush lightly. Add oregano, thyme and salt, and work mixture just to blend. Mix in lemon juice then oil. Or, seal sesame seeds in plastic sandwich bag and crush using rolling pin, then place in small mixing bowl. Adding herbs, rub them between your fingers, a teaspoon at a time, and crumble them into bowl. Add salt, lemon juice and oil.
- 3 In baking dish just large enough to hold chicken pieces, spread onion slices over bottom. Make 2 diagonal slits in each chicken breast, cutting almost to the bone. Arrange chicken in baking dish. Using your fingers, coat chicken with za'atar, pushing some into slits. Cover baking dish with foil.
- 4 Bake chicken for 30 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer registers 160 degrees F. Let baked chicken sit for 10 minutes, before serving.
- 5 To serve, place a chicken breast on each of 4 dinner plates, accompanied by onions. Pass pan juices separately, in a pitcher. Or, cool chicken and serve it in slices, with cooled onions and reserving liquid for cooking vegetables or for a flavorful addition to soups and sauces. You can also tear it into pieces for a delicious chicken salad.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

(Makes 4 servings) *Per serving:* 258 calories | 12 g total fat (2 g saturated fat) | 6 g carbohydrates | 30 g protein | 2 g dietary fiber | 304 mg sodium

Recipe courtesy of the American Institute for Cancer Research