



The Childhood Liver Disease Research and Education Network strives to provide information and support to individuals and families affected by liver disease through its many research programs.

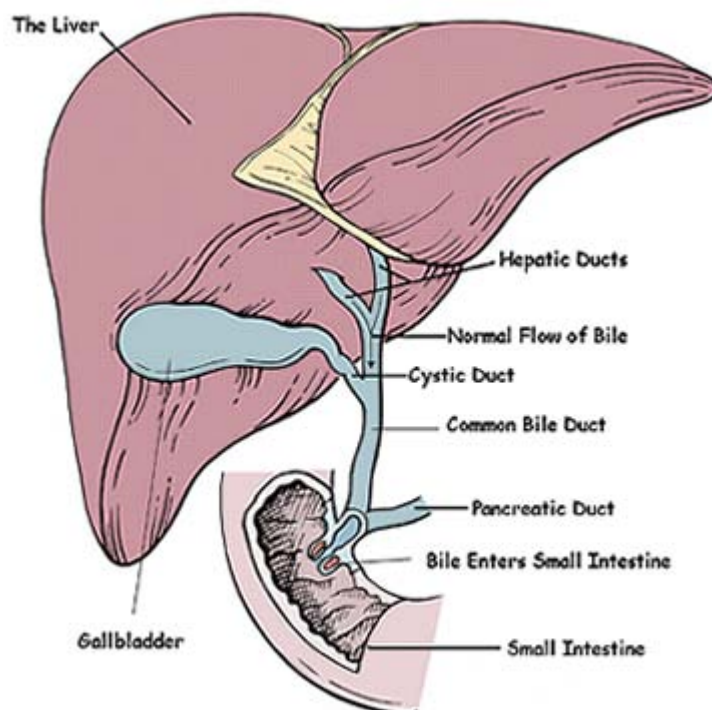
ABOUT THE LIVER

The liver is the largest organ in the body. It is essential in keeping the body functioning properly. It removes poisons from the blood, produces agents to control infection, and removes germs and bacteria from the blood. It makes proteins that regulate blood clotting and produces bile to help absorb fats and fat-soluble vitamins.

Signs of Infant Liver Disease

In a baby there can be one or more signs that the liver is not working properly. The skin and eyes may be jaundiced (appear yellow). Jaundice is caused by a buildup of bilirubin in the blood. The abdomen may look swollen or stick out. The urine may be dark yellow or brown. The stools are often grey or white instead of green or yellow. There may also be bleeding or easy bruising. The blood might contain higher than normal levels of liver enzymes. The liver may feel large or look large on an x-ray. Jaundice, if it occurs in the first few days after birth and then goes away by about a week of age, is not harmful. This is called 'physiologic jaundice.'

Jaundice that remains or increases after a week from birth or 14 days for preterm infants, may be due to a build-up of bile in the liver (cholestasis) and requires further testing.



The Biliary Tract

Bile is a fluid made in and released by the liver. It flows from the liver, through the bile ducts and into the small intestine where it is needed for the digestion of fats. The gallbladder is an organ which stores bile produced by the liver. Eating signals the gallbladder to send bile down the bile ducts to the small intestine.