Liver Injury

The liver is located in the right upper portion of the abdomen underneath the ribs. The liver helps with digestion, filters the blood of toxins (such as alcohol) and breaks down a variety of things in the bloodstream for the body to use (protein, sugar, fat, medicines).

A liver injury can be a bruise (contusion) or a tear (laceration) in the liver. A tear may need to be repaired in surgery. Liver injuries are common with chest and abdominal trauma.

Your trauma team will discuss tests and treatment options with you that are recommended for your injury.

Some Common Tests:
- CT scan (Computed Tomography scan) uses a series of x-rays to obtain pictures of the liver.
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) gives a more detailed view of the liver and the tissue around it.
- FAST (Focal Assessment Sonogram in Trauma) is an ultrasound often done in the emergency department. It looks for blood around the liver.
Treatments:
- You will have blood drawn often to check certain blood levels. These tests can reveal if the liver is still bleeding. If these levels remain stable, surgery is not needed. If the blood levels start to decrease, surgery may be needed. In surgery, the tear will be repaired.
- You will have your abdomen assessed often by your nurse for pain, tenderness and firmness.
- You may be on bed rest. This helps to keep the tear from getting bigger. It also prevents more bleeding.
- You may not be allowed to eat until your health care team decides whether you will need surgery or not.

When you go home:
- Most liver injuries heal without complications. To help with recovery, it is important that you follow the instructions given to you by your trauma team.
- Do not lift, push, or pull more than 10 pounds until your doctor says that it is ok.
- No sports (football, hockey, wrestling, basketball, baseball, soccer, rock climbing, running, etc.) for at least 6-8 weeks for minor liver injury and 3 months for a severe liver injury or until your doctor tells you that it is ok to start these activities.
- Unless your doctor says that it is ok, do not take Aspirin, Advil®, Aleve®, ibuprofen, Motrin®, or other medicines that could cause you to bleed, for six weeks.
- Take prescribed pain medicines as ordered. Do not take more than is prescribed.

Call your clinic if you have any of these symptoms:
- Yellow skin color (also seen in the whites of the eyes).
- No appetite, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Fever greater than 101°F.
- Increased weakness or fatigue.
- If you had surgery and your incision is warm, painful to touch or has drainage.

Call 911 if you suddenly experience:
- Shortness of breath.
- Dizziness or fainting when standing up.
- High heart rate (over 100 beats per minute) while resting.

Surgery Clinic: (608) 263-7502. This is a 24 hour number. After hours, weekends, and holidays ask for the Trauma Doctor on call.

Toll Free: 1-800-323-8942