

# Heed the health of your liver this holiday season

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As a holiday mantra "eat, drink and be merry" has a great ring to it. What's the festive break if not to feast on the food and drinks we love with the people we love?



And while occasional overindulgence shouldn't be cause for concern, it's important to consider the role of your liver in managing all the excessive sugar, salt, fats and alcohol coming its way while you enjoy your fifth "guilt-free" glass of wine or third bowl of double-cream chocolate ice-cream for the day.

"The liver is, in many ways, the body's unsung superhero as it performs in excess of 500 vital functions. As one of the biggest and most robust organs in the body, a healthy liver is central to a healthy body and mind," explains Dr Ade van Heerden, medical doctor, lieutenant in the SANDF and Miss SA 2017. One of the liver's main functions is to rid the body of toxins and to "flush" the system of substances that are no longer needed.

Excessive eating, drinking and even stress puts additional pressure on the liver and straining the liver for a prolonged period of time will cause it to function less optimally, which in turn means it has difficulty detoxifying chemicals and metabolising drugs.

Looking after your liver will ensure you're more energised in the short-term and generally healthier in the long term.

Here's how you can protect your liver this festive season.

## Make moderation your mantra

We're all familiar with the lethargy that comes with being so full (often from the Christmas lunch feast) that you can hardly move, or feeling so lightheaded from that last "one for the road" gin and tonic that you can have to blink twice to read a WhatsApp message. "Overindulgence from eating and drinking puts enormous strain on your liver as it's the organ responsible for 'neutralising' the body of the excess food and drink," Dr Ade points out. Show a bit of kindness to this super organ by eating and drinking in moderation at all times.

## Get a little help

No matter what the superhumans will have us believe, there is nothing shameful in asking for help! And that's true of your liver health too. A daily supplement like Essentiale Extreme supports healthy liver functioning and helps regenerate liver cell membranes.

## Embrace exercise

For some years now sitting has been touted as the new smoking. As we become increasingly aware of the harmful effects

of a sedentary lifestyle, the need for regular exercise as part of our weekly routine cannot be ignored.

Dr Ade says: "Regular exercise is also essential for a healthy liver as it helps to keep your weight down, which reduces the stress on the liver. And you don't need to be running marathons or summiting mountains. A brisk walk or a few laps in the pool every other day is a great start."

## Take medication only as prescribed

Medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, should always be taken with care, consideration and according to the recommended dosage guidelines.

The liver has a key role to play in metabolising drugs that enter the system and veering from the dosage recommended by a healthcare professional can put unnecessary strain on the liver, and cause serious damage in the long-term.

"And don't think because it's an over-the-counter analgesic or anti-inflammatory that you can take it indefinitely. Often it's not the strength of the drug that causes the liver damage but the frequency with which you take it," Dr Ade cautions.

Cheers to sparing a thought for your liver as you live your best life this summer.

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