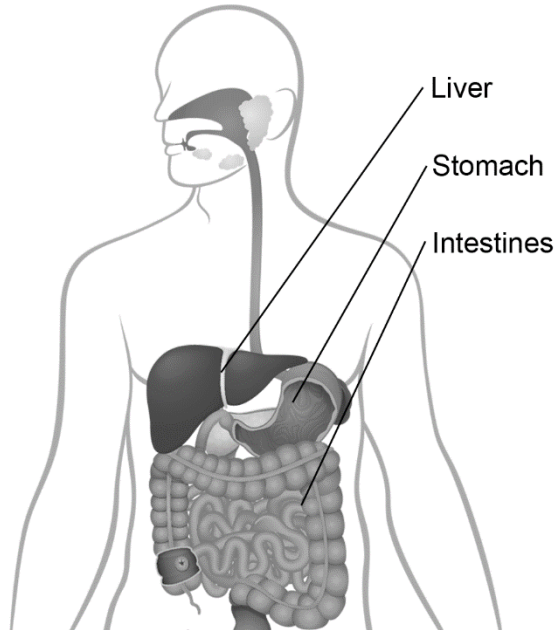


The Liver, Tumors, and Cancer

The liver is in the upper right side of the belly. It lies under the diaphragm. It is on top of the stomach, right kidney, and intestines. The liver has many roles:

- Removes harmful substances from the blood
- Makes enzymes and bile that digest food
- Stores sugar the body later uses for energy



Location of the liver

About Liver Tumors

Throughout the body, new cells form to replace old, dead cells all the time. Sometimes new cells form when the body does not need them, or old cells do not die when they should. Extra cells can build up and form a mass of tissue called a growth or tumor. Tumors can be benign or malignant.

Benign tumors are not cancer. Doctors can usually remove them. Once removed, benign tumors rarely come back. Their cells do not spread to other parts of the body.

Malignant tumors are cancer. Cancer cells can invade nearby tissues and organs. Cancer cells can also break away from the original, or primary, tumor. These cells start new tumors in other organs. Cancer that spreads is called metastatic. It can be life-threatening.

Cancer and the Liver

Liver cancer is when cancer cells start in the liver. Other types of cancer can spread, or metastasize, to the liver. These are known as different types of cancer, not liver cancer. For example, if colon cancer spreads to the liver, it is called colon cancer with metastasis to the liver.

Here are some signs of possible liver cancer:

- Pain on right side of the upper belly
- A lump or a feeling of heaviness in the upper belly
- Feeling swollen or bloated in the belly
- Loss of appetite and feeling full after small meals
- Weight loss
- Weakness or feeling very tired
- Nausea and vomiting
- Jaundice (yellow skin and eyes, pale stools, and dark urine—all signs the liver is not working right)

Many other health problems can also cause these signs. If you have any of these signs for longer than a few days, see a doctor as soon as possible. If you have jaundice, see a doctor right away.