LIVER FUNCTION TESTS KNOW THE FACTS



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WHY IS LIVER IMPORTANT?

The largest internal organ in the body, the liver is absolutely vital for survival. It has a lot ofvital functions:

- Produces bile, a mixture of chemicals, which aids digestion.
- Helps break down food to turn it into energy.
- Removes harmful substances from the blood, helping fight infection.
- Makes chemicals that are importantfor blood clotting.
- Stores iron, vitamins and other essential substances.

WHAT ARE "LIVER FUNCTION TESTS"?

Liver function tests are blood tests that help your doctor check your liver's health and detect liver damage. These tests measure the levels of certain proteins andenzymes in your blood.

WHY ARE LIVER FUNCTION TESTS DONE?

Liver function tests may be done for many reasons. They are usually done in patients who are at risk for liver disease. Some doctors perform these tests as part of a regular checkup. Doctors also use them to monitor a patient's liver disease and to check if treatment is working.

WHAT ARE THE COMMONLY USED LIVERFUNCTION TESTS?

- Liver Enzyme Tests usually detect the level of certain enzymes produced in the liver. The two commonly tested enzymes are Alanine Transaminase (ALT or SGPT) and Aspartate Transaminase (AST or SGOT). High level of theseenzymes is a reliable sign of liver disease.
- Liver Protein Tests measures the amount of protein in your blood. The two main proteins found in the blood are albumins and globulins. These proteins are made in the liver. Low level of albumin can be a sign of liver disease.
- Blood Clotting Tests measure how well your blood clots. The commonly done test is known as Prothrombin Time (PT) or INR. These test measures how much time it takes for your blood to clot. A highprothrombin time or INR is one of the most reliable markers of liver damage.
- Bilirubin Tests measures the level of bilirubin in your blood. Bilirubin is the yellow pigment that accumulates in the skin and eyes when you get jaundice. If your liver is damaged, bilirubin levels in the blood increase. A high level is a dangerous sign in any form of liver disease.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR LIVER FUNCTION TESTS?

Your doctor may ask you not to eat or drink and avoid medications before your blood tests. Certain foods and medications may affect your liver function test results. Tell your doctor about all the prescription, over the counter and herbal supplements you are taking.

WHAT ARE NORMAL RANGES FOR LIVER FUNCTION TESTS?

Normal ranges for liver function tests can vary by age,gender and other factors. Laboratory test results usually provide normal ranges for each liver function test with your results. Talk to your doctor about your results.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM DETECTED TO ABNORMAL"LIVER FUNCTION TESTS"?

You must consult a specialised liver doctor to take further opinion. It is good to repeat the liver function tests to make sure that the levels are persistently abnormal. Inform the doctor about all the other diseases (such as diabetes and high cholesterol levels) that you may have, and the medicines you are taking. You must be truthful about alcohol consumption. Your liver doctor will recommend several tests for further evaluation.These tests usually include blood tests for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, diabetes, cholesterol and an ultrasound scan of the liver. Depending upon the results of these tests, your doctor may give you initial advice or ordermore tests.

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