

# Love Your Liver?

## *Learn About Milk Thistle!*

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It's not easy doing what a liver has to do these days. Everything we eat, breathe and absorb through our skin must be refined and detoxified by our livers. Pesticides, chemicals, food additives, emissions from organic fuels, and hormones in meats are among the many toxins chronically invading our systems.

Operating as more than just a detox agent, the liver also stores and mobilizes energy, aids digestion, regulates blood clotting, manufactures and stores a wide array of nutrients, and much more. And, the tricky part about the liver is that it's not likely to complain until it's seriously damaged.

How to treat your liver with respect? According to the American Liver Foundation, care involves: watching alcohol and drug intake (mixing medicines or meds and alcohol can be especially toxic to the liver), eating plenty of nutrients and fiber (to restore the liver's balance), and managing weight (higher body mass is correlated with liver damage).

Antioxidants have been shown to neutralize many toxins processed by the liver. Milk thistle—which contains the extract silymarin, a flavonoid compound—is known as one of the most potent antioxidants for liver health.

In fact, milk thistle, which is extremely safe even in high doses, has long been used in Europe for treating

liver disorders. Milk thistle is kept on hand in European emergency rooms for treating ingestion of poisonous mushrooms, including the lethal death-cap mushroom whose toxin targets liver cells.

Research has shown silymarin to prevent the depletion of glutathione, an important antioxidant that helps bind fat-soluble toxins (i.e., heavy metals, solvents, and pesticides) and convert these toxins into water-soluble compounds readily excreted by the kidneys.

Milk thistle also has been shown to stimulate production of *new* liver cells, inhibit the production of liver-damaging leukotrienes, and protect against hepatotoxic drugs (such as popular over-the-counter acetaminophen, used regularly for headaches and pain).

Further, milk thistle has positive effects in protecting the kidneys, the brain, and other organs from toxins; increasing bile production; blocking some inflammatory reactions; and acting as an anti-allergenic compound.

Pretty impressive for the seeds of a spiky thistle that grows just about anywhere in dry, sunny soil!

*Cindy Marteney is the president of Our Health Co-op, which focuses on healthy aging and making high-quality dietary supplements affordable, especially for those with limited means. Our Health Co-op was recognized by [SupplementQuality.com](http://SupplementQuality.com) as a "quality vendor" in 2004. Write to [cindy@ourhealthcoop.com](mailto:cindy@ourhealthcoop.com). Learn more at [www.ourhealthcoop.com](http://www.ourhealthcoop.com) or call 561.656.4011.*



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