

# Try These 7 Herbs to Protect Your Liver Health

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

May 11, 2026

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Milk thistle and turmeric are powerful liver-supporting herbs that reduce inflammation, oxidative stress, and cellular damage through antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties
- › Green tea catechins can reduce liver inflammation biomarkers by 42% and oxidative stress by 31% within 12 weeks of supplementation
- › Eliminate vegetable oils and alcohol immediately, as they create toxic aldehydes that damage liver cells and promote dangerous fat accumulation
- › Increase choline intake through egg yolks and grass fed liver, or supplement with citicoline to help export fat from liver cells effectively
- › Stay physically active and maintain healthy waist measurements to reduce visceral fat that contributes to liver scarring and fatty liver disease

Your liver handles over 500 functions, from filtering blood and neutralizing toxins to regulating hormones and producing bile. If it's constantly overburdened, which is increasingly the case in a world saturated with environmental toxins, medications, and ultraprocessed food, its health can suffer, and you'll feel the effects all over your body.

In light of this, protecting your liver is important. While it can heal itself from damage,<sup>1</sup> the chronic assaults will eventually take a toll, and before you know it, scarring has already occurred. Fortunately, there are several alternatives to protect liver function, and they come in the form of herbs.

# 7 Herbs to Help Support Your Liver

Taking a natural approach to promoting optimal liver function is ideal because you don't have to rely on expensive pharmaceuticals. That said, The Hearty Soul shares seven herbs that have a long history of enhancing liver health:<sup>2</sup>

1. **Milk thistle** – One of the most famous herbs for liver health, milk thistle has a long history of use, dating back to over 2,000 years. According to an article published in StatPearls:<sup>3</sup>

*"Milk thistle exhibits its hepatoprotective properties by 3 major mechanisms: an antioxidant, an anti-inflammatory, and an antifibrotic substance. The anti-inflammatory properties of milk thistle are attributable to its ability to regulate cytokines responsible for inducing inflammation. Milk thistle has been shown to down-regulate and inhibit the expression of COX-2, a key mediator of inflammatory pathways."*

2. **Turmeric** – An ingredient essential to making curry, this powerful spice contains curcumin, which research shows to possess antioxidants and anti-inflammatories.

While turmeric is easy to incorporate in most dishes, here's a handy tip to improve its bioavailability – **pair it with black pepper**. It contains a bioactive ingredient called piperine, which synergizes with curcumin.

3. **Barberry** – While not a popular herb, The Hearty Soul notes that it's one of the most powerful options for liver support. It contains a polyphenol called berberine, which "helps shield liver cells from oxidative damage and inflammation."<sup>4</sup> A meta-analysis<sup>5</sup> in the Journal of Translational Medicine supports this hypothesis.

4. **Dandelion root** – Despite being classified as a backyard weed, this herb also contains antioxidants and other compounds that promote bile production. According to a study published in the Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Medicine:<sup>6</sup>

*"The anti-inflammatory effects of dandelion, the prebiotic effects of its oligofructans, inhibitory effects against the release of lipopolysaccharides and fasting induced adipose factor, digestive enzymes, and enhancing effects of lipogenesis, reduce lipid accumulation and liver inflammation, which directly or indirectly improve the liver functions."*

5. **Ginger** — One of the most diverse herbs used in cooking, ginger also has therapeutic qualities that benefit liver health. In a 12-week randomized clinical trial, researchers noted that ginger benefited patients diagnosed with **fatty liver disease**.<sup>7</sup>
6. **Green tea** — Research shows that this popular drink is rich in catechins that help lower liver fat levels. In a 12-week study performed by researchers, they noted that participants had better liver lipid profiles in addition to a reduction in body fat.<sup>8</sup>
7. **Panax ginseng** — Best known as an adaptogen, this herb also has hepatoprotective properties. In a 2023 meta-analysis, the researchers noted that bioactive compounds in panax ginseng reduced inflammation responses in the participants, which led to lower fat production. The gut microbiome also benefited from panax ginseng, which led to better liver fat metabolism.<sup>9</sup>

## **Additional Scientific Evidence Supports Herbal Solutions**

Going deeper into science behind the different herbs that protect your liver, a meta-analysis published in *Hepatology Forum* analyzed their clinical effects on liver diseases, including fatty liver disease, hepatitis B, and alcoholic liver damage.<sup>10</sup>

- **The standout herb was green tea** — Again, green tea was noted for its catechins content. In one clinical trial reviewed, patients with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) who took 1,080 milligrams (mg) of green tea catechins every day had a 42.1% drop in alanine aminotransferase (ALT), a well-known biomarker liver inflammation.

Alongside that, patients had a 31% reduction in urine 8-isoprostane, which is a chemical byproduct of oxidative stress that damages liver cells. These results didn't take months or years to appear. The changes in liver enzymes and oxidative stress markers happened within 12 weeks.

- **Milk thistle is another top performer** – Silymarin, the active extract from milk thistle, was praised by the researchers. Multiple randomized controlled trials showed that silymarin improved liver enzymes like ALT and AST, while also reducing levels of malondialdehyde, another marker of oxidative stress.

In patients with alcoholic liver disease, milk thistle helped stabilize enzyme levels and reduced the rate of liver cell damage. This is especially relevant for people recovering from alcohol use or prescription medication overload, since both are known liver stressors.

- **Berberine manages fat buildup in the liver** – This herb was shown to not only improve liver enzymes but also regulate fat metabolism. In patients with metabolic syndrome or fatty liver, berberine helped normalize triglyceride levels and reduced liver fat buildup.

Berberine also activates an enzyme called adenosine monophosphate-activated protein kinase (AMPK), which acts like a metabolic switch. When AMPK is turned on, your cells burn fat more efficiently and reduce the accumulation of triglycerides in the liver. This helps reverse fatty liver from the inside out, rather than just masking symptoms.

- **A multifaceted approach maximizes benefits** – Each of the mentioned herbs affects a different pathway, which means they complement each other. For example, green tea scavenges free radicals before they can do harm, while milk thistle reinforces the liver's cellular walls and promotes regeneration. Berberine targets the root of fat-related liver damage by balancing glucose and lipid metabolism.

## **Additional Strategies to Protect Your Liver**

If you think you've been neglecting your liver health, there's still time to turn things around. The earlier you get tested, the better your chances of repairing liver damage that can become permanent down the road. Hepatic problems are often silent, creeping only when the situation turns dire. To protect your liver, I recommend you follow these tips, in addition to incorporating the herbs mentioned earlier:

- 1. Eliminate vegetable oils and alcohol** – These two are the top toxins that harm your liver. In light of this, if you're still using anything labeled "vegetable oil" or eating ultraprocessed foods that contain soybean oil, corn oil, or canola oil on the label, you're fueling a direct attack on your liver.

Vegetable oils are loaded with **linoleic acid** (LA), a polyunsaturated fat (PUF) that interferes with your cellular function and encourages fat buildup in liver tissue. The result? Chronic inflammation and a sluggish metabolism. It's important that you swap them out right away in favor of healthy meals cooked in healthy fat, such as beef tallow, ghee, or grass fed butter.

Now, even if you're eating a healthy diet, understand that LA is ubiquitous in the modern food supply. To protect your health, minimize your LA intake to less than 5 grams per day from all sources. If you can get it down to less than 2 grams per day, that's even better for your health. I encourage you to download the upcoming Mercola Health Coach App, as it has a feature called the Seed Oil Sleuth – it will help you calculate the LA in your food up to a tenth of a gram.

Similarly, avoiding alcoholic beverages is paramount because it wreaks havoc through a process like LA. When your body tries to break down either alcohol or vegetable oils, it ends up creating destructive byproducts – acetaldehyde from alcohol and oxidized linoleic acid metabolites (OXLAMs) from LA. These are aldehydes, a class of unstable molecules that damage your cells, trigger inflammation, and disrupt liver regeneration.

If your bloodwork shows elevated liver enzymes or you carry noticeable weight around the midsection, cutting out both alcohol and industrial vegetable oils immediately gives your liver the breathing room it needs to recover.

- 2. Eat more choline-rich foods** — **Choline** directs fat out of your liver. Without enough of it, fat doesn't get packaged and sent to other places in your body that need fat and ends up accumulating in the liver. That buildup triggers inflammation and can eventually lead to fibrosis or even cirrhosis. The good news? You can turn this around with the right foods.

Egg yolks from pasture-raised chickens are one of the best sources of choline. Grass fed liver is another choline powerhouse, delivering a form your body absorbs efficiently. For context, choline is what your liver uses to create phosphatidylcholine — a compound required for exporting fat from liver cells.

- 3. Take a supplement if you're not getting enough choline** — If you're limiting animal products due to health reasons, your choline intake is likely too low. Cruciferous vegetables offer some choline, but you'd have to eat plenty of them to get what your liver needs. In these cases, supplementing becomes a helpful adjunct to avoid fat accumulation.

While there are several types of choline supplements available, I recommend citicoline. Based on my research, it is one of the most overlooked forms of choline, mainly because previous supplements use ineffective dosages. But used at the right level — between 500 mg and 2,500 mg per day — it does far more than just cover a nutrient gap.

Citicoline helps your liver clear out fat more efficiently and boosts acetylcholine production, which your brain depends on for focus and memory. If you're experiencing insulin resistance, mental fog, or liver dysfunction, this supplement supports detox and brain performance at the same time.

**4. Stay active to shrink your waistline** – You don't need an intense workout routine to improve your liver health. Just move your body every day. **Take a walk**, do some stretching, or run through a basic bodyweight routine a few times per week. Movement helps lower insulin, increases blood flow to the liver, and supports overall metabolic health.

If your waist size is over 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women, that's a sign that visceral fat – the dangerous kind that surrounds your organs – is accumulating. Incidentally, this type of fat is also tied to liver scarring and progression toward fatty liver disease.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Herbs for Liver Health**

**Q: What are the best herbs to support liver health naturally?**

**A:** Several herbs have been shown to support liver function through antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and fat-regulating actions. Top choices include milk thistle, turmeric, barberry, dandelion root, ginger, green tea, and panax ginseng.

Milk thistle helps regenerate liver cells and lower enzyme levels. Green tea catechins reduce liver fat and inflammation. Barberry, which is rich in berberine, activates fat-burning pathways and lowers liver fat. Dandelion and turmeric also assist with bile production and reduce oxidative stress.

**Q: Can herbs reverse liver damage from fatty liver or alcohol?**

**A:** Yes. For example, green tea catechins reduced alanine aminotransferase – a liver enzyme linked to inflammation – by over 42% in just 12 weeks. Berberine has been shown to regulate fat metabolism and reduce liver triglycerides, helping reverse fatty liver. Milk thistle's silymarin has helped stabilize liver enzymes and protect against further alcohol-related damage.

**Q: What lifestyle habits worsen liver health and need to be stopped immediately?**

**A:** Two of the most damaging habits are consuming vegetable oils (like soybean, corn, and canola oils) and drinking alcohol. Both produce harmful byproducts – OXLAMs from vegetable oils and acetaldehyde from alcohol – that directly damage liver cells, disrupt detox pathways, and accelerate aging. These compounds lead to fat buildup, inflammation, and eventually scarring.

If your waistline is expanding, your enzymes are elevated, or you're feeling sluggish, removing both from your life is one of the fastest ways to let your liver recover.

**Q: Why is choline important for liver function, and where can I get it?**

**A:** Choline is required for your liver to package and export fat to cells throughout your body. Without enough choline, fat accumulates in the liver and can lead to inflammation, scarring, and fatty liver disease.

Egg yolks from pasture-raised chickens and grass fed beef liver are excellent natural sources. If your diet lacks animal products, you likely aren't getting enough choline. In that case, supplementation, particularly with citicoline, will help restore fat metabolism and even improve cognitive function.

**Q: How does exercise impact liver health, and what type is best?**

**A:** You don't need intense workouts – daily movement is enough to improve liver function. Walking, light stretching, or a few strength routines per week can lower insulin, improve circulation to the liver, and reduce dangerous visceral fat.

## Sources and References

---

- <sup>1</sup> NIH, March 9, 2021

- <sup>2, 4</sup> The Hearty Soul, July 11, 2025
- <sup>3</sup> StatPearls, "Milk Thistle"
- <sup>5</sup> J Transl Med. 2024 Mar 1;22:225
- <sup>6</sup> Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine 10(1):p 1-10, January 2020
- <sup>7</sup> Clin Exp Gastroenterol. 2020 Jan 23;13:35–45
- <sup>8</sup> Int J Mol Med. 2013 Nov;32(5):989-94
- <sup>9</sup> Nutrients. 2023 Jan 31;15(3):721
- <sup>10</sup> Hepatol Forum. 2024 Jan 16;5(1):50–60