

Journey to the center of you

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I had a friend of mine say that he had an appointment for the “doc to see all his stuff”. Honestly I had to look away. All I could picture was a team of medical providers and he looking over a rock collection or something. I asked him, with a very straight face, “What stuff?” This big rough and tough guy blushed from head to toe. Here was a 48 year old male who apparently did not have any personal relationship with his “stuff”. He didn’t even know the term “annual appointment”.

How does this sort of thing happen? How are we supposed to talk to medical professionals and understand the answers if we don’t even bother to understand our own bodies or, at the very least, have a basic sense of where the major things on the inside are? When something goes wrong, it’s very helpful for a patient to have the basics of anatomy when it comes to understanding a diagnosis or treatment. Remember these are very basic definitions and in no way reflect the complexity of these organs.

1. The heart is approximately the size of your fist. It’s on the left side behind the chest wall. Your heart’s job is to circulate the blood around your body.
2. The spleen is under your left rib cage. It cleans your blood, breaks down the bad stuff and sends it all to your liver as bile.
3. Your liver is on the right side under the rib cage. It’s positioned under the right lung and diaphragm. Your liver is a storehouse for blood, minerals and vitamins. It’s also going to store things like illegal drugs, poisons and other bad stuff you chose to put in there. The liver also produces “bile salts” which are moved by the gallbladder into your small intestine to absorb fats. The liver is a very, very busy organ. Take good care of it.
4. The gallbladder is located under the liver near the bottom. The gallbladder moves those bile salts along their way.
5. The stomach is located on the left of center and goes to just below the sternum. The stomach and it’s various parts process your food.
6. Helping your stomach along is the pancreas which secretes a juice that makes it possible for digestion to happen in the small intestine.
7. You’ve got two lungs which are located behind your ribs in the “thoracic cavity”. Your lungs mix blood and oxygen to expel used air and other bad stuff.
8. Your kidneys are above your waist in the back. The ribs protect them. They’re about the size of your ear. They handle filtering the fluids in your body that you put in and any unneeded byproducts leftover from your body’s internal workings.

There is, of course, a lot more to all of this. You can get details on all your internal systems, organs, their locations and what they do at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_anatomy. Don’t get overwhelmed. Just get familiar with what is in your body. Never attempt to diagnose yourself. You simply want to build a better understanding of your inner workings. Clear questions, a strong understanding of your own body and an open line of communication will be sure to put you on the path to better health.

Get to know your insides. It’s really pretty fascinating in there!