

Hepatosplenomegaly

Mummy: *This illness is lasting too long!*



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Today Jaime's mum decided to go to the paediatrician. Jaime has had a fever for 5 days. In addition, his throat is very sore, and he is tired.

At first his mum thought it was just another cold, like last winter, but as this time the fever lasted longer than usual, she preferred to have him seen by a paediatrician.

At the consultation, the paediatrician asked him a series of questions and then asked Jaime to get on the examination table to examine him. She listened to his chest, looked at his throat and touched his belly. When she touched his belly, she told his mother that his liver and spleen were swollen, known as hepatosplenomegaly, something Jaime's mother had never heard of before.

But what is hepatosplenomegaly?

Hepatosplenomegaly is an enlargement of the liver and spleen, which are two organs inside the abdomen.

Why does hepatosplenomegaly occur?

The liver and spleen are two organs located inside the abdomen, on either side of the stomach and protected by the ribs in case of a blow. Their function is to "clean" the blood of substances that are not good for us, as if they were a kind of natural "filter" in our body. In addition, they also serve to store things, as if they were a "storehouse" of products that can serve the body at another time.

The liver and spleen can become enlarged for many reasons. For example, when we have an infection with a virus, bacterium or parasite, the liver and spleen have to work harder than usual and can become inflamed. On other occasions, the liver and spleen increase in size because they store more than the normal amount of those products necessary for the body that we mentioned earlier.

What do we feel if we have hepatosplenomegaly?

Most of the time we will not notice anything, and we will only know that we have hepatosplenomegaly if we go to the doctor for another problem.

As we know, sometimes the cause can be an infection and, in that case, we may have a fever, tummy ache, tiredness, sore throat or vomiting.

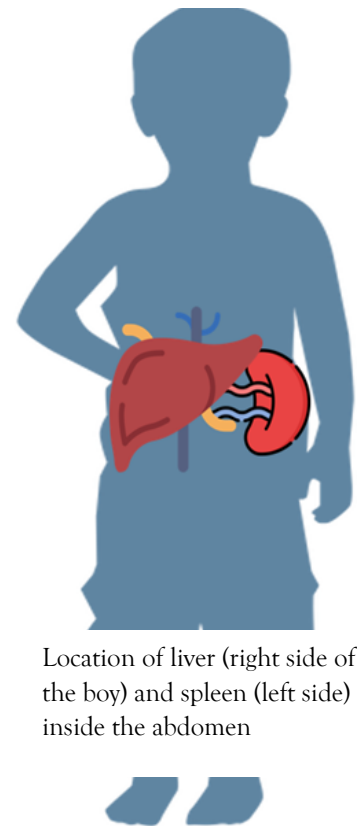
How does the doctor know if we have hepatosplenomegaly?

If we go to the paediatrician because we have a fever or any other problem, the doctor will examine us and, by touching our tummy, will be able to see that the liver and spleen are larger than normal because they protrude below the ribs.

Other times, if your tummy hurts, the doctor may do an ultrasound scan, which is a device that can see inside your organs. In that case, he or she will also be able to tell if your liver and spleen are larger than normal.

In that case, if the doctor thinks we may have an infection from a virus, bacteria or parasite, he or she may do a blood test to find out.

How is hepatosplenomegaly treated?



Location of liver (right side of the boy) and spleen (left side) inside the abdomen

A learner-centric microbiology education framework

As we already know, the cause is often an infection. In this case, it will be necessary to prescribe the appropriate drugs to kill the bacteria or micro-organism causing the infection, except in the case of viruses, which the body can solve with its own defences. Once the infection is resolved, the liver and spleen will return to normal size.

However, care must be taken because if you fall and hit your belly, you can injure your liver or spleen. This is because the ribs can no longer fully protect the liver and spleen as they get bigger and can be injured more easily.