Mayo Clinic Minute: Why more liver donors are needed

April is National Donate Life Month. It's observed to help raise awareness about the importance of organ donation.

In the U.S., it's estimated that 4.5 million adults are diagnosed with chronic liver disease. It develops over time and may be caused by a number of conditions including, hepatitis, genetics, alcohol overuse or cancer. Chronic liver disease is different than acute liver disease, which can come on quickly and may be the result of an injury or a virus.

Regardless of the cause, Dr. Bashar Aqel, a Mayo Clinic transplant hepatologist, says when the liver can no longer function, a life-saving transplant may be needed.

Video.	Audio
	The liver is the largest internal organ of the body. It is essential for metabolism, digesting food and ridding the body of toxic substances. Liver failure can happen quickly, or over time.
Bashar Aqel, M.D. Transplant Hepatology Mayo Clinic	"Once liver disease advances, the only way we can reverse the process and give the patient their life back is by replacing the liver.
	Unfortunately, there are more people waiting for a liver than there are available organs.
	"They usually are anxiously waiting for that call when a donor becomes available. And that's what we call the deceased donor liver transplantation."
	Another option is a living liver. Donors needs to go through an extensive evaluation to make sure they can donate safely.
	"A healthy liver is able to regenerate. With living donor liver transplantation, both segments of the liver will grow back to almost the normal size within 90 days after transplantation."
	Being a living organ donor may not be an option for everyone, but there are ways to people can sign up to be an organ donor. It can be as easy as checking a box on your driver's license.
	"Donating your organs is really donating the gift of life to people who are in urgent need for organ transplantation."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Joel Streed.