



Your Liver. Your Life.

## Press Release

Contact: Lenore Neier, VP Marketing & Communications

tel: 212-668-1000 x137 | fax: 212-483-8179

✉ lneier@liverfoundation.org

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## AMERICAN LIVER FOUNDATION OFFERS INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES COPING WITH BILIARY ATRESIA

*Reporter's surgery renews focus on disease that attacks infants*

**New York, NY – June 6, 2006** - Fox News homeland security correspondent *Catherine Herridge* is in surgery today to donate part of her liver to her infant son, Peter, who was born in December with a liver condition known as biliary atresia. The surgery is expected to last 10 hours at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Both mother and son face about two months of recovery after the surgery

Approximately 15,000 young children in the United States suffer from some form of liver disease, and every year approximately 300 children under the age of 5 requires a liver transplant. One of the more common forms of pediatric liver diseases is biliary atresia, a serious disease of the young infant affecting one out of every 9,000 births. The cause is unknown and results in inflammation and obstruction of the ducts which carry bile from the liver into the intestine.

The American Liver Foundation, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for promoting liver health and disease prevention, is working to educate the American public about this serious illness. "People tend to ignore the importance of a healthy liver," said Fred Thomson, president of the American Liver Foundation. "But the liver handles thousands of vital functions every day. People need to make sure they know what they can do to improve the wellness of their liver."

Some important facts about biliary atresia:

- The symptoms of biliary atresia are usually evident between two and six weeks after birth. The baby will appear jaundiced, and may develop a large, hardened liver and a swollen abdomen.
- There is no cure for biliary atresia.
- The most successful treatment for the disease is an operation called the Kasai procedure in which the surgeon removes the damaged ducts outside of the liver and replaces them with a length of the baby's own intestine. The procedure is successful in about 50% of cases.
- If the Kasai procedure is not successful, the only remaining treatment is liver transplant.

American Liver Foundation  
75 Maiden Lane, Suite 603, New York, NY 10038-4810  
[www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org)



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The American Liver Foundation recognizes that parents of children with biliary atresia need help in coping with the immense strain of this chronic illness. To meet this need, the American Liver Foundation is continually organizing and coordinating mutual help groups through its chapters to provide emotional support for families, making referrals to specialists where appropriate, and keeping people aware of the latest research developments.

For more information about biliary atresia as well as other liver diseases and to learn more about liver wellness, please contact the American Liver Foundation at 1-800-GO-LIVER or at [www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org).

### **About the American Liver Foundation**

The American Liver Foundation is the nation's leading nonprofit organization promoting liver health and disease prevention. ALF provides research, education, and advocacy for those affected by liver-related diseases, including hepatitis.



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