

# The University Hospital Liver Transplant Program



Introduction to the Liver Transplant Program

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Alliance Transplant Services

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 University of Cincinnati  
Medical Center

# Welcome

**Welcome** to The University Hospital Liver Transplant Program. This program began in 1986, and seven years later, in 1993, the 100th liver transplant was performed. As of June 1999, there have been almost 300 adult liver transplants performed.

**This booklet gives you some** information about liver disease, treatment and becoming a candidate for liver transplantation.

**You are in the hands of** a highly specialized and multi-disciplined liver transplantation team at The University Hospital. This highly skilled and experienced team will provide the best, safest and most efficient care possible.

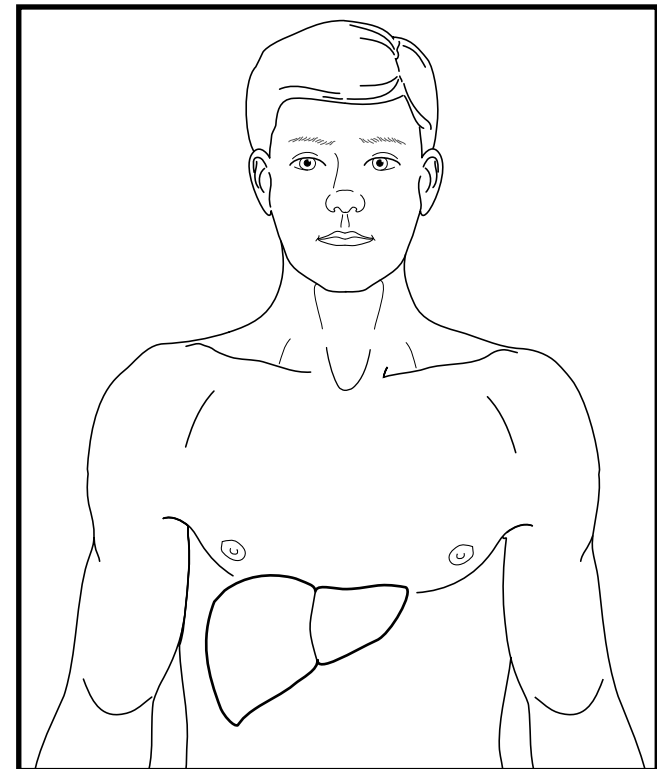
The University Hospital and Children's Hospital Medical Center combined provide the largest liver transplant program in Ohio. Surgeons at The University Hospital performed the state's first adult living related donor liver transplant from a son to his mother.

We encourage you to read this information carefully and to ask your doctor any questions you may have regarding liver transplantation surgery. The more you know about your liver and the transplant procedure, the more you will be able to participate in your own health care.

## What is the liver and where is it located in the body?

The liver is the largest organ in the body. It is located on the upper right side of your abdomen and under your rib cage. The major functions of the liver are to:

- ❖ Change food into nourishment for your body. It produces bile to breakdown and absorb fats.
- ❖ Store fats, sugars and vitamins.
- ❖ Manufacture proteins for blood clotting factors.
- ❖ Remove chemicals, drugs, alcohol and other substances that may be toxic to your body.



## What diseases affect the liver?

Quality of Life

Your liver condition may be caused by one of the following diseases or conditions:

- ❖ Hepatitis B or C
- ❖ PBC (Primary Biliary Cirrhosis)
- ❖ PSC (Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis)
- ❖ Alcoholic Cirrhosis
- ❖ Cryptogenic Cirrhosis
- ❖ Budd-Chiari Syndrome
- ❖ Venocclusive Disease
- ❖ Hepato Cellular Carcinoma
- ❖ Fulminant Hepatic Failure
- ❖ Wilson's Disease
- ❖ Hemochromatosis
- ❖ Polycystic Liver Disease
- ❖ Drug Induced Hepatic Failure
- ❖ Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency
- ❖ Biliary Atresia
- ❖ Various Inborn Errors of Metabolism

## Are there liver disease symptoms that I need to address immediately with my doctor?

Care

If you experience any of the following symptoms you should report them immediately to your doctor:

- ❖ Fever over 101 degrees fahrenheit
- ❖ Trouble breathing
- ❖ Increased tiredness
- ❖ Bleeding  
This includes vomit that is brown (like coffee grounds), a nosebleed, blood in your urine or stool that is black.
- ❖ Any fall or injury that could cause internal bleeding
- ❖ Confusion or dizziness
- ❖ Severe abdominal pain
- ❖ Decreased urination over 24 hours
- ❖ Inability to eat for a period of more than 24 hours

## What is end stage liver disease?

End stage liver disease is the final stage of liver failure. It includes symptoms like yellowing of the skin (jaundice), itching, dark colored urine, gray or clay colored stools, ascites (fluid collection in the abdomen), encephalopathy (mental confusion), coma, easy bruising, intestinal bleeding and fatigue. In general, people who qualify for liver transplantation have end stage liver disease.

## What is the treatment for liver disease?

Care

Treatment options for liver disease will depend upon your health condition. Sometimes liver disease may best be treated by medical interventions.

Severe liver disease may require medical and surgical intervention. For example, you may benefit from surgical intervention such as a shunt procedure.

If you are a candidate for liver transplantation, the physicians (hepatologist/transplant surgeon) will conduct a thorough medical evaluation to determine if a cadaveric liver transplant or a living related liver donor transplant is the best option for you. During the evaluation, we carefully look at your overall medical condition and we make sure that you meet specific criteria.

Your physicians will always discuss your condition and options with you and your family so together we can decide what will benefit you the most. It is a team effort.

## What is a cadaveric liver transplant?

During surgery the diseased liver is removed and replaced with a healthy liver that comes from someone who is deceased.

## What is a living related liver transplant?

During surgery the diseased liver is removed and replaced with a partial liver, which is usually the right lobe. This is from a living donor.

## How do I find out if I am a candidate for a liver transplant?

Liver transplant evaluation includes a number of laboratory tests, X-rays and specialty consults. This will give a thorough picture of your overall health to ensure that you are able to undergo transplant surgery and that a liver transplant is the best treatment for you.

Most of the time, the tests are completed on an outpatient basis. However, if there are other health concerns, you could be hospitalized for the tests. The entire evaluation process takes about two to four weeks. Prior to any testing, you will be informed of special instructions.

Plan on two hours for your first visit. At this visit you will have meetings with members from the medical team and have a physical exam. Please bring a family member with you to help with any additional information that may be needed. Your medical records will be requested from your referring physician prior to this visit.

A follow-up appointment will be scheduled with a transplant physician to review your test results.

If your health permits you to have the testing performed as an outpatient, and you live outside the Cincinnati area, a social worker can help with overnight accommodations. Plan to stay at least two to four days. You may want to ask about The Holmes on Eden, an affordable and comfortable hotel created for The University Hospital patients, their families and friends.

The evaluation may reveal certain conditions that need to be corrected prior to transplant surgery. In rare instances, the tests will disclose a problem that makes transplantation ill-advised.

The results of the tests will be discussed with you. We will provide you and your family with as much information as possible about liver transplantation to make certain that you are well prepared for the transplant process. It is important that you and your family understand the importance of following medical instructions as an essential part of recovery and long-term survival.

## What if I qualify for a liver transplant?

Once your diagnostic work has been completed, the physician (hepatologist/transplant surgeon) will determine if you have end stage liver disease that requires a liver transplant. This will be discussed with you and your family. If you do require a liver transplant, and you are in agreement with this treatment plan, your medical information will be presented to The University Hospital Liver Transplant Multidisciplinary Team Committee for approval. This team includes physicians, nurses, a social worker, a dietitian, physical therapist, ethicist and financial counselor.

## Are they the same team that will take care of me?

Your transplant treatment team includes liver transplant surgeons, gastroenterologists/hepatologists, nurses, transplant assistants, a social worker, dietitian, financial counselor, physical and occupational therapists, your primary care physician, you and your family. The medical members of this team are some of the same clinicians on The University Hospital Liver Transplant Multidisciplinary Team Committee.

## What happens when I am being considered for a liver transplant?

If it is determined by The University Hospital multidisciplinary team committee that you meet the criteria for transplantation and are approved, your medical information is presented to the Ohio Solid Organ Transplantation Consortium Committee. This is a committee of physicians and other health care professionals who also evaluate your medical information with specific guidelines to establish if you are a candidate for liver transplantation. If these individuals also determine that you need a transplant, you will be listed with the United Network for Organ Sharing. The liver transplant office will contact you once this process is complete.

Once that process is complete and you are listed, a pager will be provided by a paging company. Depending on your status, you may be given a prescription for an anti-fungal medication. The waiting time for liver transplantation varies. It may be six to 12 months or longer. The time period depends upon donor availability, blood type, the size of the donor organ and your medical condition.

While you are waiting you will need to purchase a thermometer, blood pressure cuff/stethoscope and bathroom scale. After your transplant, you will need to learn to use them, and each day you will record your temperature, blood pressure and weight. Twice a week you will report these readings to your doctor.

## What about the cost?

## Quality of Life

Most insurance companies cover many of the costs related to organ transplantation. The specific amount of coverage varies according to your health plan. The University Hospital's transplant program is approved by Medicare and Medicaid. This approval is based on the high standards of care we provide and the high success rate of our program.

As part of our program, a financial counselor will meet with you to discuss your insurance plan and potential costs of transplant surgery. This occurs during the pre-transplant and evaluation period. At that time, the financial counselor and social worker will work with you and your insurance company to insure the maximum coverage for care. You are responsible for all co-payments.

## What happens when a donor organ becomes available?

When a donor organ becomes available, you will be contacted by telephone or pager by the liver transplant coordinator and then admitted to the hospital. You will be taken to the operating room, and once the transplant surgery is completed, you will be placed in the intensive care unit and closely monitored for a few days. Then you will be transferred to a transplant unit where you will learn about your medications, exercise, diet and rehabilitation. The usual length of hospital stay is about two weeks.

## What happens when I leave the hospital?

After you leave the hospital, your health will be monitored through outpatient visits with your transplant surgeons. These visits will include help with medication management, laboratory testing and clinic visits. Follow-up care is important after transplantation to maintain maximum liver function and to rapidly identify and treat complications. Your compliance with medication management and laboratory testing will help ensure the best possible care.

## Can I expect to return to a normal life?

In spite of the need for follow-up care and many medications, it is possible for liver transplant recipients to return to an active lifestyle. Patients can return to work and resume other healthy activities.

Members of your transplant team are available to provide you with more information and assistance upon your request. For more information, call (513) 584-9999.

**How to find us:**

**North or south from I-75:** Exit at Hopple Street. Turn left on Hopple to Martin Luther King Drive. Take Martin Luther King to Highland Avenue. Turn left on Highland Avenue. Entrance to the Goodman Parking Garage is on Highland.

**North from I-71:** Exit at Reading Road. Travel north on Reading to Martin Luther King Drive. Turn left on Martin Luther King to Highland Avenue. Turn right on Highland Avenue. Entrance to the Goodman Parking Garage is on Highland.

**South from I-71:** Exit at Taft Road. Take Taft to Highland Avenue. Turn right on Highland Avenue. Entrance to the Goodman Parking Garage is on Highland.

**By city bus:** The following buses will bring you to the hospital and Medical Center: 46 Vine/Burnet-Avon View, 49 Mt. Adams-Zoo, 51 Clifton-Hyde Park. For more information, call the Queen City Metro at 621-4455.

**Parking in the Medical Arts Building (UC Physicians building):** The parking entrance to the Medical Arts Building is on Eden Avenue. Eden Avenue is off Martin Luther King Drive, one block east of Vine and one block west of Highland.

