

LAURIE GEROW

LUNG TRANSPLANT AT UPMC

The Path to the UPMC Lung Transplant Program

No matter what life throws her way, Laurie lives by two simple words – “just breathe”. Even when she was sick, this mantra kept her going.

Laurie was first diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in 2013, a severe disease of the lungs that occurs when your lungs become inflamed or damaged. It wasn't until 2018 that she had significant trouble breathing and her health started to severely decline. In 2022, she was added to the lung transplant waiting list at UPMC.

In order to be eligible for a transplant, Laurie had to do rehab and physical therapy multiple days a week to build her strength and stamina for surgery. Despite the physical obstacles she had to work through, she didn't let it keep her from her end goal of transplant.

“You have to stay motivated,” she explains. “As much as I hated doing the work, I never gave up my spirit at all.”

Though she lives outside of Harrisburg, Pa., Laurie's care was seamlessly transitioned to Pittsburgh once she and the team decided to pursue a lung transplant. Laurie feels grateful to have worked with the UPMC Lung Transplant team, especially with Chadi Hage, MD, pulmonologist and medical director of the UPMC Lung Transplant Program. She leaned on the entire medical team for support and reassurance when she felt defeated.



“I just had the most positive people throughout the whole process,” she says.

She found comfort in Dr. Hage telling her exactly what was to be expected for the surgery without instilling any fear in her.

“I give Dr. Hage a lot of credit. If I had any questions, I was able to call out of the blue,” she shares. “The team was just wonderful. I even have their number on speed dial, and I still call them today. That's how much they have my back.”

After several months on the waiting list and receiving the call twice for lungs that ultimately were not viable, the third time was the charm. She underwent a lung transplant in July 2023 and has never looked back.

“Life is amazing. I don't take one day for granted,” Laurie says. “I can get out and I'm not out of breath. I can do so much more with my grandchildren. We go on walks and go to parks. My life has changed so much.”

Laurie also expresses immense gratitude for the donor that allowed her to receive her lungs and a second chance at life.

“I have this saying, ‘just breathe’. I get up in the morning now and I can take a deep breath,” she says. “I'm going to make sure I use [my donor's] lungs just as she would do herself.”

Continued on back



IT WAS A LONG AND FRUSTRATING JOURNEY TO GET A LUNG TRANSPLANT. I HAD A LOT OF WORK TO DO BUT I WAS A FIGHTER.

— Laurie Gerow

Laurie takes pride in sharing her story to help motivate those who are still on the waiting list or working to be eligible. Her advice for those feeling discouraged is simple.

“Just breathe. Do what the team is telling you to do even if it feels like a challenge. Keep a good attitude and meet everybody halfway. They’re here to help you. It makes the process a lot easier even though it’s scary at times. Think of the outcome and don’t give up. It’s coming. It may take a while, but it’s coming.”

Laurie’s treatment and results may not be representative of similar cases.

Lung Transplant Evaluation Clinics at UPMC

At UPMC, our experts take a collaborative approach to providing patients with advanced treatment options and support at every stage of their transplant journey. This includes diagnosis, pre-evaluation, transplant, and post-transplant care. Our evaluation clinics at UPMC Washington and UPMC Passavant provide pre-transplant testing for those with end-stage lung disease.

If a patient is deemed a candidate for surgery, our teams will work together to create a seamless transition of care between the localized evaluation and prospective transplant at UPMC Presbyterian. Increasing access to advanced lung disease services is key in achieving our goal to provide life-saving care to all patients who will benefit.

Why Choose UPMC?

If you’ve been diagnosed with lung disease, trust the experts from one of the country’s most recognized and experienced lung care centers.

Since the inception of the UPMC Lung Transplant Program in 1982, our surgeons have performed more than 2,500 lung and heart-lung transplants. We are one of only a few lung transplant centers in the United States that has achieved this volume while maintaining outcomes consistent with national averages.

As pioneers in lung transplant, we evaluate many high-risk patients for both single or double lung transplants and for those in need of re-transplantation or a multi-organ transplant. There is no age restriction for lung transplant referrals and we offer second-opinion services for patients who are looking for additional options or were turned down for transplant at another center.

UPMC is home to one of the oldest and largest transplant families, referring providers, and transplant case managers throughout the transplant journey. Although transplantation is a complex, serious procedure, we maintain a personal, patient-focused approach that takes into consideration the stress and concerns many individuals experience.

Our Locations

UPMC Presbyterian
200 Lothrop St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

EVALUATION CLINICS

UPMC Washington
155 Wilson Ave.
Washington, PA 15301

UPMC Passavant
1 Saint Francis Way
Cranberry Twp. PA 16066

For more information about lung transplant, please visit [UPMC.com/LungTransplant](https://www.upmc.com/LungTransplant).