

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPMC Liver Transplant Program



1. I would like to know if I can be listed for a liver transplant at UPMC. What do I need to do to get the process started?

Your doctor can refer you to the UPMC Liver Transplant Program, or you may refer yourself. Visit UPMC.com/LiverTransplant for more information about what is needed to be referred to the program. Information can be faxed to UPMC via a secure e-fax line at 412-692-4154.

2. Will my insurance cover the cost of a liver transplant?

The costs of liver transplant surgery vary depending on your insurance and every insurance plan is different. Your credit analyst and social worker at UPMC will work with you and help you understand what parts of your medical care will be covered.

3. Do I have to quit drinking alcohol before my transplant?

UPMC will require that you be alcohol and substance free to receive a transplant. Your transplant doctors want to ensure that the new liver is placed in a healthy home. Additionally, many insurance companies require that you be free from alcohol or other substances for a minimum of six months before agreeing to cover transplant expenses. These substances include:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Other illicit substances
- Nicotine
- Cocaine/heroin

4. Will UPMC still evaluate me for a liver transplant if I was turned down by another center?

Our experts review the case of every patient who is referred to us. We will consider you for a liver transplant even if you have been previously turned down at a different center. We can often use some of the results from testing done at other medical centers, but require that you be seen by our physicians and the rest of our transplant team.

5. What should I do if I don't live in Pittsburgh?

Depending on where you live and the status of your liver disease, you may need to travel to Pittsburgh during the liver transplant process. While on the liver transplant waiting list, you need to live within a four to six hour drive of UPMC to make sure that you can get to the hospital as soon as a liver becomes available.

6. What should I expect at an outpatient liver evaluation?

The outpatient liver transplant evaluation takes three to five days for all appointments and testing to be completed. Patients will have consultations with members of the transplant team.

7. How often are follow-up appointments after liver transplant surgery?

The frequency of your follow-up visits depends heavily on the speed of your recovery. In most cases, you will visit UPMC's posttransplant clinic:

- Once a week for the first month
- Every three months for the first year
- Every two weeks until month three
- It will be determined by your doctor after 12 months.

8. Who can be my liver transplant caregiver?

Being a caregiver is a big responsibility. You may need more than one person to help you for the first few months after your liver transplant. Caregivers can be a spouse, sibling, child, friend, or neighbor.

9. What is the role of a liver transplant caregiver?

Your caregiver will need to provide support throughout the entire liver transplant process and attend all appointments with you during your evaluation. They can also help with regular chores that you cannot do after surgery and help you take your medication at the proper times.

10. After I go home, can I have my follow-up care with a local liver transplant center?

The team at UPMC will take care of you for at least the first year after your transplant, and ideally for life. In some special circumstances, you may be able to find a local transplant center that can help take care of you.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPMC Living-Donor Liver Transplant Program



1. Who can be a living-liver donor?

Living donors will undergo an extensive transplant evaluation before being allowed to donate. To become a living donor, you must:

- If a directed donor, be between the ages of 18 and 60
- If a non-directed donor, be between the ages of 20 and 60
- Be in good health
- Meet all other living-liver donor eligibility requirements

2. Do I need to have a compatible blood type with the recipient to become a liver donor?

In the past, one requirement for living donation was that the liver transplant recipient and donor needed to be a blood group match. This is no longer the case. If you've been told that donating your liver would not work due to the "wrong" blood type, we urge you to contact our program to discuss this new possibility.

3. Do I need to be a relative of the person who receives my liver?

While many wish to donate a portion of their liver to a family member, you can donate your liver to a friend, coworker, or even a stranger.

4. Who pays for liver donation surgery?

Before your evaluation, a UPMC transplant credit analyst will financially clear you for living-donor liver surgery. The evaluation, the surgery, and all care before and after the procedure will be covered by your recipient's insurance. Prescriptions after you are discharged from the hospital are not covered.

5. What does the living donor evaluation involve?

Before scheduling living-donor liver surgery, you will undergo a thorough evaluation. This will ensure that you have no conditions or concerns that would cause special risks during the surgery. Evaluation includes medical diagnostic tests like blood work and radiology as well as meetings with a transplant social worker, our independent living donor advocate, an anesthesiologist, a hepatologist, and a transplant surgeon.

6. Do I have to quit smoking before becoming a living donor?

Ongoing smoking can increase risk during surgery. We require all living donors to stop smoking for at least one month prior to donation.

7. Are there risks to living donation surgery?

As with any surgery, the operation can include complications such as bleeding, infection, bile duct problems, and blood clots, etc. Donor safety is our top priority and we take utmost precautions to avoid complications. The Living-Donor Liver Transplant team will discuss all of the possible risks with you before the procedure.

8. How much of my liver will be removed as a living donor?

The percentage of the liver that is removed from the donor varies depending on the age and size of the person receiving the transplant. If you are becoming a living donor for an adult, about 50 to 60 percent of your liver will be removed. If you are becoming a living donor for a child, about 25 percent will be removed. The liver regenerates, or grows back, to its full size in the donor and recipient in about eight to 12 weeks.

9. Will I need to take any medication after donating a portion of my liver?

No. You will not need to take any medicine. You will need to receive post-liver-donation care at UPMC Montefiore to ensure proper healing.

10. How long does a liver donor usually stay in the hospital?

Following living-donor liver surgery, you will move to an inpatient post-surgery unit to make sure you do not need further treatment. From there, you will transfer to a transplant recovery floor. Living donors typically spend a total of four to five days in the hospital. If you live far from the hospital, you will be required to stay local to Pittsburgh until your first follow-up visit.