

Liver Transplant Overview

What is Liver Transplantation?

Liver transplantation is a surgical procedure that may be performed when people have irreversible liver failure. This means that their own liver no longer works well enough to keep them alive.

During liver transplant, a diseased or injured liver is removed and is replaced with a whole or a part of a healthy liver from another person called an organ donor.

Why Would a Liver Transplant be Suggested?

A liver transplant may be suggested when a person has liver failure and the liver no longer works well enough to keep them alive. Liver failure can be acute or chronic.

Acute liver failure can happen suddenly because of infection or complications from certain medications. Chronic liver failure happens over a longer time and is usually the result of cirrhosis, in which healthy liver tissue has been replaced with scar tissue making the liver unable to carry out its normal functions. There are several possible causes of cirrhosis (e.g., viruses, alcohol misuse, NASH, genetic diseases, and more).

What is the First Step to Getting a Transplant?

The first step to getting a transplant is a referral by your physician to a transplant center, where a team of specialists from a variety of fields will evaluate you to determine if you are a suitable transplant candidate.

Types of Organ Donors

There are two types of organ donors. Deceased donors are those who donate their organs or tissue after they have died. Living donors are people who wish to donate part of their livers to someone in need of a transplant.

How Long is the Wait?

It's impossible to predict how long you may wait for a new liver. Sometimes people wait only a few days or weeks before receiving a donor organ, but it may take months or years. Waiting time depends on your blood type, body size, severity of illness, and availability of donor organs in your region.

To learn more about liver transplant, scan the QR code below. For a complete list of all of our free resources, please visit:
liverfoundation.org/resource-center.

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For questions about liver wellness and disease, or for emotional support to patients at the point of crisis and information on local resources including physician referrals, please contact our Helpline at 1-800-465-4837.

