

Becoming a Candidate

For liver transplant

Who decides if I am a candidate for transplant?

Your health history and current health must be assessed before your name can be put on a waiting list for a liver transplant. You will not be listed for transplant until:

- Your health assessment (also called your *medical evaluation* or “work-up”) is done by clinical staff on the Liver Transplant Team;
- **and:**
- You have been approved by the Liver Transplant Selection Committee.

How are transplant recipients chosen?

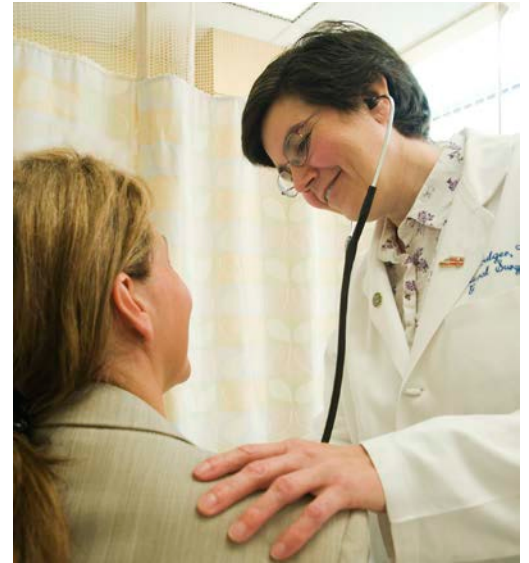
Liver transplant recipients must meet the requirements listed in the “Selection Criteria Policy.” You should have received a copy of this policy at your first clinic visit.

After you complete all your tests and consultations, your information is given to the Liver Transplant Committee. This committee will meet with members of the Liver Transplant Team to review your assessment results.

At this meeting, the committee will decide if you meet basic criteria for a liver transplant.

To be listed for transplant, you must have:

- End-stage liver disease that cannot be cured by other treatments
- Not used alcohol and illicit substances for at least 6 months
- A stable home and support system, such as family and friends
- Full understanding of the transplant process



You must have a complete health assessment before you can be listed for transplant.

- The ability to follow through with the medical care that will be needed before, during, and after transplant
- Followed instructions from your doctors up to this point
- No active infections
- No active cancer, except certain liver tumors
- No other health conditions that will interfere with your recovery from a transplant (such as heart or lung disease)

After this committee meeting, you will find out your status as a liver transplant candidate. If your status is:

- **Accepted:** This means you meet the criteria for transplant. You will be listed for liver transplant as soon as we have financial clearance from your insurance company.
- **Accept-Pending:** This means that you meet the criteria for transplant, but you need to complete more tests. If you are still a candidate after these tests are done, we will ask for financial clearance from your insurance company and list you for transplant.
- **Approved-Pending Timing:** This means that you have met the basic criteria for transplant, but you will not be listed because of your low *Model for End Stage Liver Disease* (MELD) score (see page 3) and your activity level.
- **Deferred:** This means that you do not meet the criteria for transplant at this time. But, the Transplant Team is willing to work with you to help you meet the criteria.

For example, a deferred candidate may have a health problem that can be treated, need counseling for a psychiatric diagnosis, or need treatment for past alcohol or drug abuse.

The Transplant Team will prescribe treatments or counseling for the deferred candidate as needed. The candidate will have a specific amount of time to complete these steps. If these are done in the time given, the candidate can again apply for liver transplant. The Liver Transplant Committee will do another review and decide on a status.

- **Denied:** Being “Denied” means you do not meet criteria to receive a liver transplant. This status can be given for many reasons. For example, a candidate may be denied if their health assessment showed medical issues that make a liver transplant too risky. Or, a deferred candidate may be denied when they reapply, if they did not follow the recommendations from the committee.

If the Liver Transplant Committee asks you to have more tests, or prescribes treatments or counseling, transplant coordinators and support staff will work with you to schedule your appointments. The Transplant Team expects you to come to all scheduled appointments and to complete all of the recommendations from the committee.

Your MELD Score

After we receive financial approval to list you for liver transplantation, we will ask you to get a simple blood test at UWMC or your local lab, whichever is easiest for you. This test will give us your MELD score.

Your MELD score shows how severe your liver disease is. This score can range from 6 (less severe) to 40 (very severe).

The demand for organs is greater than the supply. Because of this, donated livers are offered first to recipients with a high MELD score.

The MELD blood test measures:

- **Bilirubin**, to check for jaundice
- **INR** (*international normalized ratio*), to check how well your blood clots
- **Creatinine**, to assess your how well your kidneys are working

Your MELD score changes over time. The higher your MELD score is, the more likely it is that you will receive a liver transplant.

How often do I need to have blood tests?

The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) requires you to have periodic blood tests to stay active on the transplant list.

This table shows how often you must have blood tests, based on your current MELD score:

If Your MELD Score Is:	You Must Have Blood Tests:
6 to 18	Every 90 days
19 to 24	Every 30 days
25 or higher	Every 7 days

Make Sure We Get Your Test Results!

Remind your lab and doctor that all new blood test results must be sent RIGHT AWAY to your transplant coordinator. Make sure your transplant coordinator receives these test results.

If we do not receive your blood test results within 24 hours of your blood draw, it can affect your standing on the liver transplant list. Missing your blood tests, or not getting your test results to your transplant coordinator, could mean missing a life-saving opportunity.

Make the Most of Your Waiting Time

If you are listed for transplant:

- Work to maintain or improve your nutritional and physical status.
- If you have pets, make plans for their care while you are in the hospital (see “Care After You Leave the Hospital” section).
- Have a transportation plan to and from UWMC. This may include air flights, taxi rides, and rides with friends and family.
 - If you will be flying to Seattle for your transplant surgery, find out the schedule for all flights to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, at all times of the day or night.
 - If you are a Medicaid recipient and you live more than 2 hours away from Seattle, you must contact your local Medicaid Transportation Broker for help with an open-ended ticket.
- Have a housing plan ready if you live more than 2 hours from UWMC. Ask your insurance case manager about travel benefits. Plan ahead for how you will pay for meals and lodging.
- If you do not have a working cell phone with voice mail service, get one.
- Talk with your doctor about any doubts or concerns you may have. Remember, all of your questions and concerns are important.
- Ask your scheduling coordinator to coordinate your follow-up appointments on a day when the liver transplant support group is meeting. Ask your social worker for the schedule of group meetings.
- The internet is a vast resource, but it does not always have correct or up-to-date information about transplants. Your doctor is the best person to answer your questions. Read all that you can, but rely on your doctor for medical decision-making.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Transplant Services:
206.598.8882