

Your Health Assessment, Labs, and Tests

Preparing for a liver transplant

Liver Transplant Evaluation

The evaluation process is complex and is unique to each patient. Before you begin each test, the Transplant Team will explain why you are having the test and what to expect during the test.

After your health assessment, labs, and tests are complete, the Transplant Team will review your test results and decide whether the benefits of a liver transplant are greater than the known risks for you.

Referral to the Transplant Program

The Transplant Team received and reviewed your health records after your local healthcare providers referred you to the UWMC Liver Transplant Program. Based on this review, the team decided to schedule you for a health assessment.

You will be scheduled for some lab tests before your first clinic visit. We will send your test results to your local healthcare providers.

Our financial department will work with your health insurance company to make sure these tests and your health assessment are covered by your insurance policy.

Your First Consult

During your first consult at the clinic, the Transplant Team will:

- Review your health history
- Give you a physical exam
- Review your mental and emotional history and nutritional status

Based on the results of your lab tests and this health review, our Transplant Team will work with you to create your plan of care. This plan may or may not include a transplant evaluation.



Your first consult will include a full physical exam.

You will be able to ask our Transplant Team any questions you may have about the transplant process.

Going Forward

Once our transplant hepatologists have decided that a liver transplant may be a good option for you, you will meet with your transplant nurse coordinator to talk about the transplant process. You will need to sign regulatory policies that will be kept on file at UWMC.

There are 2 parts to a transplant evaluation:

- Medical appointments and testing at UWMC
- Testing with your local primary healthcare providers.

The transplant nurse coordinator will review your required tests and what you can expect during the transplant process.

Your Health Assessment

The goal of your health assessment is to determine:

- If liver transplant is the best treatment for you
- If you are well enough to handle transplant surgery
- If other treatment options besides transplant can help you

Exams and Tests at UWMC

All exams and tests are usually done over 3 to 4 full days in UWMC outpatient clinics. Your scheduling coordinator will schedule and coordinate these exams and tests.

During your assessment:

- You will have medical tests to look at your major organs, such as your heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys.
- You will meet with many different healthcare professionals, including our transplant dietitian and social worker.

The scheduling coordinator will try to get your assessment done as soon as possible. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule.

If your health status becomes critical during this time, we may choose to hospitalize you. This will help us get the tests done more quickly so that you can be listed for a liver transplant sooner.

After your UWMC studies are done, you will be scheduled to see our transplant surgery and pre-anesthesia group.

Other Issues

- The transplant nurse coordinator will review a list of other tests with you at your initial visit. **These tests are in addition to the ones we will schedule for you at UWMC.** It is your responsibility to complete these other tests with your local healthcare providers within 30 days.
- It is vital that you and your transplant nurse coordinator talk openly so that we can complete your health assessment in a timely way.
- Your care support team must be involved in this scheduling process, in case it becomes overwhelming for you.
- Your health assessment test results may show that you have health conditions that need to be treated before we can decide if you are a candidate for liver transplant. If you need other tests, they will be done at a UWMC facility.
- For some patients, the assessment may also reveal a medical, social, or financial problem that eliminates them as a transplant candidate.
- Our goal is to decide within 60 days if you are a candidate for transplant.

The Evaluation Process

Your assessment for transplant is a long and complex process. During your evaluation, you will have many medical tests which will evaluate your major body systems.

Here is a summary of the many tests, exams, and consults you will need for you to be evaluated for a liver transplant.

- **Abdomen imaging:** Images of your liver and blood vessels are taken, to make sure you do not have any tumors.
- **Blood tests:** Tests include complete blood chemistry, tuberculosis screening, blood typing, arterial blood gas, serology testing including HIV (for AIDS), hepatitis, and screenings for other viruses.

Blood typing: We need to know your blood type so that we can find the right donor for you. Blood type matching is the most important step in finding a donor. The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) requires that you have this test done twice to be listed for transplant.

There are 4 blood types: A, B, AB, and O. Type O is the blood type most people have. Next common is type A. Only a few people have type B or type AB blood. The *ABO red blood cell match* is a test that shows if a donor's liver is compatible with your body.

- **Bone density study:** This test shows your risk for *osteoporosis* (thinning of the bones). The results will help guide your treatment after transplant. **You will need to schedule this test with your local healthcare provider.**
- **Chest X-ray:** This X-ray is done to assess how well your lungs and breathing system work.
- **Colonoscopy:** This test examines the lining of the large intestine to check for colon cancer. **You will need to schedule this test with your local healthcare provider.**
- **Consultations:** You will meet with healthcare providers at UWMC who specialize in cardiology, nephrology, pulmonology, solid organ infectious disease, endocrinology, psychology, neurology, and more.
- **Dental exam:** **You will need to schedule a visit with your dentist to find out if you need to have any dental work done.** We will need a form signed by your dentist before you can be listed for transplant. This form states that you do not have cancer or infections in your mouth.
- **Gastrointestinal endoscopy:** In this test, your doctor will look at the lining of your esophagus, stomach, and the first part of your small intestine. **You will need to schedule this test with your local healthcare provider.**
- **Heart tests:** You will have an echocardiogram, electrocardiogram (ECG), and cardiac nuclear stress testing to assess how well your heart is working.
- **Immunizations:** You will need to be up-to-date with vaccines for influenza, pneumonia (a 2-step vaccine), hepatitis A and B, tetanus, zoster (based upon age), and other vaccines as instructed by your Transplant Team.
- **Liver transplant education class:** You and your caregivers are required to attend a 3-hour liver transplant education class at UWMC during your evaluation.
- **Mammogram** (for women only): This is an X-ray exam of the breasts to check for cancer. **You will need to schedule this test with your local healthcare provider.**
- **Nutritional evaluation:** A UWMC dietitian will talk with you about your eating habits and teach you about the nutritional needs for a person with liver disease. Please bring a member of your care support team to this meeting. (See “Nutrition” section.)
- **Pap smear and trans-vaginal ultrasound** (women only): These exams of the pelvic area screen for pelvis abnormalities and cancer.

- **Pre-anesthesia consultation:** You will meet with an anesthesiologist at UWMC to talk about the risks involved with having anesthesia during transplant surgery.
- **Pulmonary function testing:** These tests check how well your lungs and breathing system work. They include arterial blood gas testing and pulmonary function testing, if needed.
- **Social work evaluation:** A UWMC social worker will talk with you about your personal, family, and financial situation, including your drug and alcohol history. Please bring a member of your care support team to this meeting. (See “Social Work Services” section.)
- **Surgeon’s consultation:** You will meet with a transplant surgeon at UWMC who will review your test results and explain the transplant surgery. You will have an opportunity to ask questions. (See “Liver Transplant Surgery” section.)
- **Toxicology screening:** Transplant patients must NOT use illegal drugs, alcohol, or marijuana. You may use pain medicine if it is prescribed by your doctor and you take limited doses. We will do random drug screenings throughout the pre-transplant phase.
- **Urine tests:** You will do a 24-hour urine collection to assess your kidney function.
- **Financial review:** Your UWMC financial coordinator will work with your insurance company to make sure you have enough insurance to cover the costs of liver transplant. (See “Financial Planning” section.)
- **University of Washington Transplant Policies (regulatory required documents):** As a transplant candidate, you are required to sign many forms about the transplant process. You will be given copies for your records.

Lab Tests

The UWMC lab is on the 3rd floor (main level) of the hospital, behind the Pharmacy near the Medical Specialties Clinic. The lab is open weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please allow 30 minutes to have your tests done.

If you need to do your lab tests after hours, go to the UWMC lab on the 2nd floor of the hospital in room NW220. Someone at the Information Desk in the main lobby of the medical center can give you directions.

Liver Transplant Education Class

You and your caregiver(s) must attend the Liver Transplant Education Class. This 3-hour class is taught by your transplant nurse coordinator and the transplant pharmacist. The class provides:

- A brief overview of liver disease and the transplant surgery

- A review of follow-up after surgery
- Transplant expectations
- A review of transplant medicines and their side effects
- Answers to many basic questions

Please bring your caregiver(s) with you to class. Their attendance in class is an important part of the transplant process. If your support person cannot attend the class with you, please talk with the scheduling coordinator about their attending on a different day.

Patient Education Handouts

UWMC has patient education handouts on many of the tests you will have as part of your assessment. All of these titles are available on the Health Online website (<https://healthonline.washington.edu>) and can be read online or printed. You may also ask your Transplant Team for printed copies.

Handouts by UWMC Imaging Services

- “Chest X-ray”
- “CT: Chest Scan”
- “Ultrasound: Abdominal Exam”
- “CT: Abdominal Scan”
- “Ultrasound: Pelvic Exam”

Handouts by the Regional Heart Center

- “Diagnostic Tests for Patients at the Regional Heart Center”
- “Transthoracic Echocardiogram”
- “Cardiac Nuclear Medicine Exam”
- “Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram”

Questions?

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

Transplant Services:
206.598.8882