

Liver Testing

For patients with Fontan circulation

This handout explains why patients who had a Fontan procedure should be checked for liver damage.

Why do I need to be checked for liver damage?

You are one of many people who had a surgery called the *Fontan procedure* to treat a congenital heart defect. The way blood flows after this surgery can cause liver damage. This damage can occur very slowly and show up years after the Fontan procedure is done.

Why am I hearing about this now, for the first time?

Doctors have been aware of this issue for only the last several years. At UWMC, we are now working with liver specialists (*hepatologists*) to monitor liver health in all patients who had a Fontan procedure.

What are the symptoms of liver damage?

Most times, liver damage does not have any symptoms. This is why your heart doctor needs to screen you for liver problems.

What screening tests do I need?

- Blood tests, to see how well your liver is working and to check for *hepatitis*, a viral infection of the liver
- A scan of your abdomen, such as a *computed tomography* (CT) scan, *magnetic resonance imaging* (MRI), or ultrasound

What happens next?

Even if your tests do not show liver damage, your doctor may want to repeat some of the tests in the future, since liver problems can develop slowly over time. Your doctor may also refer you to see a hepatologist, if needed.



Please talk with your doctor if you have questions about liver testing.

Questions?

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