The Transplant Patient
Specialties

Faced with the possible need for transplant surgery, you probably have many questions running through your mind. What does it mean to have transplant surgery? Is the transplant a cure? How will this surgery change my life? Learning the facts and being prepared will help you feel more comfortable with the idea of transplantation. This brochure, provided by Loma Linda University Medical Center (LLUMC), will guide you through the transplant process and provide information on each step, from your selection of a medical facility, to post-operative care.

Loma Linda University Medical Center’s Transplantation Programs

At Loma Linda University Medical Center, we provide expert medical and surgical treatment in a caring and comfortable environment. Our commitment to quality, research, and individualized care assures you of treatment that is both thorough and on the cutting edge of current medical technology. It is this commitment to quality and personalized care that makes our transplantation teams unique in their fields. As the mission of Loma Linda University Medical Center states, our focus is “to make man whole.” This commitment guarantees care that focuses on the overall wellness of each individual patient mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
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Our Transplant Teams

The members of LLUMC’s transplantation teams are committed to the success of your transplant. They will walk you through every step of the process, easing your concerns, answering all of your questions, and providing you with the best care available. Our highly qualified teams are both multicultural and multidisciplinary. This allows special sensitivity to the individual needs of all our patients from initial referral and evaluation, through transplantation and recovery, to follow-up visits, and your healthy return to your own physician’s care. Our teams will make sure that all the changes and transitions you experience are as easy and simple as possible. They are here to help educate and support you, and of course, help you to become and remain well.

Choosing A Transplantation Center: A Crucial Decision

Choosing a transplantation center and team will be your first major decision. Afterward, your transplantation team will help you with all your other decisions throughout the process. In a sense, you become part of the transplantation team during the process. Due to this close relationship, it is very important to find a medical facility and team that suits your individual needs; a place where you feel both confident and comfortable. The best way to begin your search is by asking questions.
The following section lists some questions that will help when looking for the right transplantation center for you.

**Quality and Qualifications**

Look at the facility’s reputation. Learn about the center’s history, background, qualifications, and survival statistics.

**What different types of transplant programs do they perform within the facility?**

Through the Transplantation Institute, pediatric and adult kidney transplants are done as well as liver and kidney/pancreas transplants. Pediatric and adult heart transplants are also done at LLUMC. Loma Linda University Medical Center has the world’s largest experience with infant heart transplantation.

**How long has the facility performed transplants?**

The LLUMC Transplantation Institute has performed kidney transplants since 1967; kidney/pancreas and liver transplants since 1993. Heart transplantation has been ongoing since 1984.

**What are the patient and graft survival statistics for each program?**

We are proud that our patient and graft survival rates are about 8 to 13% above the national average.

**Where were the transplant surgeons and physicians educated? Do they continue to update their education?**

The transplantation surgeons and physicians are all specially trained in the areas of kidney, liver, and heart diseases and especially in transplantation. Each doctor has to complete years of specialized training in order to be recognized as a “specialist.” They continue their education so they may keep up with the most recent medical and surgical treatments available. They are also involved in research projects so LLUMC can stay on the cutting edge of advanced medicine. They serve as experts within their field and are frequently asked to educate other professionals.

**What are the other team members’ education and qualifications?**

Other team members include nurses, social workers, pharmacists, dietitians, and immunology specialists. All of these team members have earned advanced degrees and have been
specially trained in chronic illness and transplantation.

**Do the transplantation programs have support departments in the hospital such as nutritional, pharmaceutical, social, and psychiatric services?**

Transplantation is a team effort. Many departments within the Medical Center have designated a person specifically assigned to the transplantation team. These departments include social services, pharmacy, dietary, the immunology laboratory, psychology, and psychiatry. This enables the team to have input from many different sources and to provide the best care possible.

**Are the transplantation programs part of a teaching facility or university?**

LLUMC is located on the campus of Loma Linda University, a private Seventh-day Adventist health science university which enrolls over 3,000 students annually. LLUMC incorporates clinical and academic functions into every day patient care.

**Individual Care and Support**

Next, you need to look beyond what the facility looks like on paper. Find out what kinds of resources, special care, educational programs, and support groups the center offers to its patients and their families.

**What kind of medical information and education does the center provide to the patient?**

The Transplantation Institute provides renal and liver patient education classes that are the basis of the education program offered for transplantation. These classes include information on transplantation as well as other issues such as diet and financial counseling. A manual is provided as part of the class that will serve as your written guide through the process. The Heart Transplant Program has developed a CD-ROM and other teaching materials to guide patients and their families through the transplant process.

**Does the center offer financial and insurance information and planning for the patient?**

The financial counselor meets individually with each patient to discuss issues
concerning insurance coverage, medication coverage, and fundraising if applicable.

Does the facility offer vocational rehabilitation?
What kind of patient/family educational programs are provided?
The social worker also meets individually with each patient. Discussion centers around family support, financial support, or any other factors that may affect the transplantation process. A psychologist is also an integral part of the team and is available as needed. Support groups are a source of support for patients and family members. The transplantation programs offer a variety of support groups.

Communication

Communication is one of the most important aspects of the transplantation process. Your nurse coordinator will be your primary contact and will act as your liaison to the rest of the transplantation team. You will be in constant communication with the coordinator during each step of the process. The financial coordinator will provide assistance with interactions and communications with your insurance provider.

Another important line of communication is between your transplantation physician and your referring physician. Your transplantation physician will consult with and inform your referring physician throughout
the transplantation process, keeping him or her notified of all decisions and developments. After your transplant surgery and post-operative care at LLUMC, your transplantation physician will send a complete copy of your records to your referring physician. This will ensure the continuity of your care throughout your surgery and recovery.

It is extremely important that you feel like there is an open line of communication between you and the transplantation team. You should feel comfortable asking questions or voicing concerns at any time. Communicating with the transplantation team is your most important role as a team member.

**Does the center assign a specific personal coordinator to each patient?**
The transplantation coordinator is assigned to your care immediately. This nurse will serve as your guide through the entire process. She will be available to answer questions or address concerns.

**Are the physicians and other team members accessible to you for questions?**
The transplantation programs pride themselves on how simple it is to gain access to the team. The coordinators and the physicians take time to make sure that all of your questions are answered and that you understand transplantation. There is 24 hour-a-day access to your primary caregivers.

**What type of communication is there between the Transplantation Center and the referring physicians/providers?**
Routine communication occurs between your physician, your insurance provider, and the transplantation team. It is very important that this communication occur so that your transplant care proceeds smoothly.

**Does the center provide educational programs for your referring physician, assuring continuity of care after your surgery?**
Different educational programs are offered by the transplantation program for physicians, patients, and family members. This provides an opportunity to learn about the most current trends in transplantation.

**Convenience**
Another important factor is convenience. You should select a place to which you and your family feel comfortable commuting. Also keep in mind...
that time will be of the essence on the day that you are called for your transplant surgery. Transportation to your transplantation facility should be easy and direct for both you and your family. Social workers will assist families coming from a long distance and those with special needs.

Are there convenient places for friends and family to stay near the Loma Linda University Medical Center?
LLUMC is located in the heart of the Inland Empire. It is close to the freeway and easily accessible in the Southern California area. There are many places to stay and many restaurants in the immediate area. This makes LLUMC extremely convenient for you and your family.

Referral
You can be referred for a transplant by your physician, medical group, insurance company, or clinic. Once you decide to pursue the option of transplant surgery, simply call Loma Linda University Medical Center’s Transplantation Institute for liver or kidney transplant or Heart Transplant Program and schedule an appointment for a pre-transplant evaluation. If you do not already have a referral, let us know when you want to schedule your appointment and we will arrange one for you.

Pre-Transplant Evaluation
The pre-transplant evaluation is the first step in the transplantation process. This evaluation will allow the transplantation team to thoroughly review your situation, make recommendations, and determine if transplantation is truly the best option for you.

At your first clinic appointment, you will have a physical evaluation, a psychological/social evaluation, and a series of laboratory tests. During this time, you will meet with the transplantation physician, nurse coordinator, social worker, and transplantation dietitian. You will also meet with the financial coordinator who will review insurance and financial information with you. In addition, you and your family will have the opportunity to attend an educational class explaining the transplantation process.

Your Nurse Coordinator
Think of the nurse coordinator as your personal guide through the transplantation process. The coordinator will take care of all your questions and concerns from the initial referral process
through post-transplant care. Your nurse coordinator will be the one to teach you how to prepare for your transplant and how to take care of yourself before and after your surgery.

The coordinator will also arrange all the appointments and events leading up to and following your surgery. These may include: scheduling your pre-transplant testing, evaluating a living donor for kidney transplants, and making sure that you have proper follow-up care post-transplant.

Physical Tests and Procedures

A series of tests will be done at the time of your clinic appointment. These tests will evaluate your health and also determine what type of donor you will need for your transplant. These tests will include:

- **Blood Typing**: This test will let the physicians know what blood type you are.
- **Viral Testing**: You will be tested for exposure to hepatitis, cytomegalovirus, and AIDS.
- **Tissue Typing**: This test is done on the white blood cells and will help to match the right organ to you.
- **Panel Reactive Antibody (PRA)**: This test will determine the strength of your immune system.

You may also have additional appointments for X-rays, heart tests, a dental evaluation, and any other medical tests that the transplantation physicians require for a thorough evaluation. At the end of this process, the physicians will have a complete understanding of your health and how a transplant will affect you.

The transplantation program is part of Loma Linda University Medical Center's comprehensive academic medical facility. This allows us to offer the most
technologically advanced care available right here in one place. All of your tests, evaluations, and lab work may be done at Loma Linda University Medical Center or at its nearby support departments.

Patient Selection for Transplant

When all of your tests are done, the patient selection committee will meet to discuss your case. Based upon your completed evaluations by the transplantation team, it will be determined if transplant surgery is the right treatment option for you.

The Waiting List

Once the patient selection committee decides that you are a candidate for a new organ, your name will be placed on the waiting list. This means you are “eligible” for transplant. If you are a potential kidney transplant recipient and you have a living donor, evaluation of the donor can begin immediately. For more information about living donors ask your nurse coordinator for the brochure called “Becoming a Living Organ Donor.”

If you are waiting for a cadaver donor, your name will be placed on a national list with UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing). UNOS is an organization supervised by the federal government. They help assure that patients throughout the country receive healthy organs as soon as they become available, and that the organs are allocated fairly across the country. In heart transplantation, patients are listed according to their blood type, weight, and medical urgency.

Waiting times vary from patient to patient depending on the type of transplant needed, the patient’s blood and tissue type, and the patient’s state of health.

The nurse coordinator will stay in touch with you during this waiting period to keep you updated on your current status.

While You Are Waiting

The next step in the transplantation process is basically a waiting period until the day you receive your call; it may be long or short depending on many factors. During this time, you will stay in communication with your nurse coordinator, alerting her to any changes in your health or your life (such as a vacation, change of address or phone number, changes in your medical insurance, etc.) and any concerns you may have regarding preparation for your
surgery. The social worker and financial coordinator will also be available to help you with any questions or concerns.

This is the time to focus on maintaining your health and preparing for your surgery both physically and mentally.

Pre-operative Phase
When an organ becomes available, the transplantation surgeon or nurse coordinator will call you. You will come to LLUMC as directed and you will be admitted at once. Your nurse coordinator, transplantation physicians, and nurses will talk you through every step of the transplantation process to ensure that you are well prepared.

Upon arrival, the transplantation team will prepare you for surgery and give you a series of pre-operative tests. These tests will ensure that you are able to undergo surgery. Once approved, the transplant surgery will take place within hours.

Transplant Surgery and Recovery
The next step is your transplant surgery. The experienced surgical transplantation team will begin a series of procedures involving the donor procurement team, the pathology department, the blood bank, and the anesthesia and nursing teams. For kidney, kidney/pancreas, and heart transplants, the surgery will take from four to six hours. For liver transplants, the surgery will last around six to ten hours.

Following your transplant, you will go to the surgical intensive care unit (ICU) where you will be closely monitored and cared for until the transplantation surgeon decides you can be moved to the transplant unit. In the case of infants and children undergoing heart transplant, they will remain in their age appropriate ICU until hospital discharge. The length of time you will stay in the ICU will depend on your overall medical condition and how well your new transplant is working.

The Transplant Unit
The transplant unit is where you will continue to recover from your surgery. This unit is staffed by a team of nurses specifically educated to care for transplant patients like you. You will be assigned a nurse practitioner who will work with the rest of the transplantation team members to make sure all your medical needs are met. While in the transplant unit, you will be
monitored by the transplantation physicians, immunologist, transplant pharmacist, and nurse coordinator. They will develop a course of treatment that is specifically designed for you.

As you prepare to complete your stay on this unit, you will meet with the transplantation pharmacist and transplantation dietitian. They will discuss your medications and diet with you and your family until you are comfortable that you can manage them on your own.

Post-Transplant Care

As you have discovered during the pre-operative phase, the transplantation team’s personalized care extends beyond your hospital stay by offering support groups, financial planning, lifestyle counseling, and nursing support, as well as education for you and your family.

Additionally, your nurse coordinator or the transplantation physician will continually update your referring physician, medical group, and/or insurance provider, and dialysis unit (if applicable) so that they will know how you are doing every step of the way. This will prepare them to take part in your follow-up care. This will make your transition from inpatient hospital recovery to outpatient follow-up care smooth and easy.

LLUMC’s transplantation programs offer a variety of educational classes, support groups, and social activities for you and your family. You will have the opportunity to meet and socialize with both pre- and post-transplant patients and their family at these events.

Once your transplant surgery is behind you, and you have made a strong recovery, your
transplantation surgeon will release you from the transplant unit. At this time, you will be scheduled for your post-transplant appointments which will be at the transplant clinic. At these visits, the transplantation surgeon will continue to closely monitor your recovery until you are stable. Then your care will be transferred to your referring physician. This usually takes between six to twelve weeks depending on the type of transplant you received and your medical condition.

Liver transplant patients will be continuously followed by the team at Loma Linda University Medical Center. Heart transplant patients will be followed at Loma Linda University Medical Center for four to six months.

Your referring physician will continue to see you routinely, checking your progress closely for the life of your transplant.

About Loma Linda University Medical Center

Loma Linda University Medical Center, a Seventh-day Adventist institution, is dedicated to the restoration of the whole person by combining the best in advanced medical science with Christian compassion. It is known around the world for its outstanding clinical services. It provides a stimulating environment for research and the training of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

LLUMC, combined with the Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital, has a capacity that exceeds 790 beds. LLUMC’s staff of over 6,400 employees provides services to approximately 33,000 inpatients and more than 650,000 outpatients each year.

As the only tertiary-care hospital in the area, LLUMC is the level one regional trauma center for Inyo, Mono, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties—an area covering approximately a quarter of the state. Over 60 percent of its patients are referred from outside a 25-mile radius. Arrangements can be made by the transplantation team for patients who live out-of-town or out-of-state.

Located in the Inland Empire, it is easily accessible from Los Angeles County, Orange County, and the desert communities. It provides quick freeway access and free parking.

LLUMC offers technologically advanced, comprehensive, and personalized medical care.
from organ transplantation to preventive health education.

Organ transplantation has a long and successful history at LLUMC, beginning in 1967 with kidney transplants and advancing to include heart, liver, and pancreas transplants in more recent times.

LLUMC maintains the highest standards of medical and patient care to serve diverse patient needs at the highest level of quality without sacrificing human dignity and personal caring.

Questions and Answers

**How long will I have to wait for an organ?**
The waiting time for each organ varies depending on many factors. The waiting time is increasing every year as more patients are added to the waiting list. There is a shortage of deceased donors, however there is an opportunity to decrease the waiting time for kidney transplant through the option of living donation.

**Where do organs come from?**
Kidneys can come from three possible sources. A living person related to you by blood may offer to donate (a “living-related” donor) or you may receive one from a living person unrelated (a “living-unrelated” donor such as a spouse or close friend) to you or a deceased donor (a “cadaveric” donor). Livers, pancreas, and hearts come from deceased donors only.

**Is it dangerous for a family member to donate a kidney?**
There is always surgical risk involved. The donor undergoes an extensive medical evaluation to make sure they are healthy and their risks are very low.

**How do I pay for a transplant?**
Most insurance companies, as well as Medicare and Medi-Cal, will pay for your transplant surgery.

**Is the transplant a cure?**
No, it is a treatment option. However, after the surgery, most people feel better, have a more liberal diet, are able to drink fluids with no restrictions, and are capable of continuing to bear children. Although the transplant is not a cure, transplant recipients experience a definite improvement in their quality of life.

**Do I have to take medicines forever?**
Yes. As long as the kidney, kidney/pancreas, heart, or liver is functioning, you will require medications that enable the body to accept the organ.
If I have a kidney/pancreas transplant, will my complications from the diabetes (i.e., blindness, inability to digest foods well, decreased circulation) get better? Although the surgery will prevent further complications and damage, it will not completely reverse any damage that occurred prior to the surgery. However, some transplant recipients do note slight improvements.
Many strengths. One mission.
lomalindahealth.org