

HEART TRANSPLANT PATIENT INFORMATION

WHAT TO EXPECT

When referred to the UAB Medicine Heart Transplant Clinic, you will have an initial consult appointment with a transplant cardiologist. If it is determined that a heart transplant is an option, you will be scheduled for outpatient testing at The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital, which takes 5-7 days to complete. If you are hospitalized or too ill to visit in person, your local doctor can discuss your case with UAB Medicine physicians. This doctor-to-doctor communication may lead to you being transferred to UAB Hospital for an inpatient evaluation.

The Heart Transplant Clinic is located within the Cardiology Clinic at The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital, which is located at 2000 6th Avenue South in the medical center district on the University of Alabama at Birmingham campus.

PARKING

For appointments in the clinic, please park in The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital parking deck at 2100 6th Avenue South.

If you need a wheelchair or other assistance, please stop at the 2nd floor entrance of the parking deck, and our escort personnel can help you get to your appointment. Valet parking and high-top van access is available in the circular driveway in front of The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital, not within the parking deck.

POSSIBLE EVALUATION TESTS

Some or all of the tests listed below may be scheduled as part of your evaluation, either on an inpatient or outpatient basis. Other tests may be needed later as a follow-up to the initial results.

BLOOD AND URINE TESTS will rule out certain infectious diseases and will measure:

- Various blood counts, such as white and red cells and platelets
- Blood type
- Blood chemistry, including tests to evaluate kidney and liver function
- The presence of viruses and/or viral antibodies. Exposure to some common viruses will not prohibit heart transplantation but could influence your post-transplantation care. In some cases, vaccination prior to transplant may be recommended.
- Levels of various drugs, including nicotine and alcohol

CHEST AND SINUS X-RAYS to evaluate the presence of fluid or signs of infection

ABDOMINAL ULTRASOUND to evaluate the liver and other abdominal organs and blood vessels

CHEST CT (CAT) SCAN to evaluate the size and shape of the heart and lungs and detect any lesions or tumors

PULMONARY FUNCTION TEST (PFT) involves breathing forcefully into a tube, to measure how well the lungs are working and the ability of the blood to carry oxygen

ARTERIAL BLOOD GAS (ABG) involves drawing a small syringe of blood from the artery in your wrist

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VQ SCAN to measure the air and blood flow in the lungs

ELECTROCARDIOGRAM (EKG) shows heart rhythm and may reveal past damage

ECHOCARDIOGRAM (ECHO) shows the function of heart valves, measures pressure in the pulmonary artery, and determines the sizes of the heart chambers

RIGHT AND/OR LEFT HEART CATHETERIZATION to check for coronary artery disease or other abnormalities

DEXA SCAN to evaluate density and health of bones

CARDIAC STRESS TEST evaluates the blood supply to the heart and provides information about how the heart is working at rest and after the heart is stressed

GASTRIC EMPTYING STUDIES to determine how quickly food leaves your stomach and enters your small intestine

DENTAL EVALUATION to assess your risk of infection and any need for restorative work prior to transplant

ADDITIONAL TESTING may be required depending on your medical history or if there are abnormalities in the above tests that warrant further evaluation

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE TEAM

INTERVIEWS with a transplant social worker, financial coordinator, neuropsychologist, nutritionist, and transplant nurse coordinator help determine how you and your family cope with stress. You will learn more about financial costs and resources available to transplant recipients.

CONSULTATIONS with a heart transplant surgeon and a cardiologist (heart specialist) allow the physicians to talk with you about your medical history, discuss the heart transplantation process, and answer any questions you and your family may have.

These tests and discussions help the UAB transplant team determine if:

- A transplant is right for you at this time.
- There are any problems, such as closed blood vessels, that could complicate your surgery.
- You are physically able to undergo transplant surgery.
- There are emotional, psychological, or family issues that should be addressed.

These tests and interviews will help the UAB transplant team maximize your chances of achieving the best results in treating your heart disease. The transplant team meets weekly to review patients' evaluation results. You will be notified of the committee's recommendations approximately 7-10 days after you complete your evaluation, and you also will receive a letter containing this information.

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PAYMENT INFORMATION

Some insurance providers may require a referral or pre-certification before seeing specialists. Please be sure to bring a copy of this referral or pre-certification with you for billing purposes. If you are unsure of what your insurance company requires, it's important to contact the company before your appointment. Your co-pay is expected at the time of your visit; however, our financial counselors are available to discuss any problems or special circumstances. Our financial counselors can be reached Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm at 205-975-9200.

LABS/TEST RESULTS

Depending on your physician and your testing schedule, your results will be discussed with you on your return visit, mailed to your home, or given to you over the phone by a member of our staff. It may take up to 2 weeks to receive the results of some specific tests that may be ordered, but your transplant nurse coordinator will tell you about any urgent lab or test results as soon as those results are available.

PHARMACY

Medications are crucial for transplant patients, so our doctors, pharmacists, and nurses monitor these closely. For this reason, our post-transplant patients see a pharmacist at every clinic visit. We also increase the accuracy and speed of prescriptions by electronically prescribing 95% of transplant-related medications. We encourage you to call us at 205-975-9200 at least one week before you need a prescription refill. Finally, we offer an option for you to receive your medications through the mail from the UAB Specialty Pharmacy.