

**The First Steps**

- ✓ Your healthcare providers will refer you for an evaluation. They may refer you to a specific transplant center or to multiple centers. You can talk to many centers but need to choose just one.
- ✓ When choosing a transplant center, there are multiple factors to consider, including:
  - ❑ The center's expertise, experience, and patient outcomes; the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients has a search engine with relevant information, which is available [here](#)
  - ❑ Your personal preferences, the center's location, and the availability of support services
  - ❑ Your health insurance coverage and costs for tests, surgery, hospital stays, and transportation
  - ❑ The availability of at least one person who can support you through the transplant process
- ✓ Your first contact from the transplant center will be with the Transplant Coordinator. This is the point person who will schedule your appointments and tests. The center will want to see your past medical tests. Work with your healthcare providers to ensure the center receives the requested records.

**The Evaluation will be Thorough**

The transplant team will look at many factors when determining your eligibility for a transplant.

- ✓ **Severity of Liver Disease**
  - ❑ Individuals with severe, life-threatening liver damage are considered more urgently.
  - ❑ Blood tests are used to calculate a Model for End-Stage Liver Disease (MELD) score. MELD is a scoring system to rank patients based on how sick they are. The score ranges from 6 (less sick) to 40 (very sick). The higher the score, the higher priority for a liver transplant.
  - ❑ In addition to blood tests, imaging tests such as CT scans or MRIs will be used to examine the liver's size and shape, and to check for tumors or blockages. Endoscopy and colonoscopy use a small camera to look at your esophagus, stomach, and large intestines. The endoscopy looks for swollen veins (called "varices") that are frequently present in advanced liver disease, and the colonoscopy checks for cancer and other intestinal abnormalities.
- ✓ **Overall Health**
  - ❑ Individuals may not be eligible for a transplant if they have other serious health problems like active cancer, severe heart disease, or uncontrolled infections. In Alpha-1, the severity of lung disease plays a role in whether an individual is eligible for a liver transplant.
  - ❑ Various tests will be used to examine your heart and lungs to ensure that you can handle anesthesia and surgery. You will usually need to get a cardiac stress test.
- ✓ **Substance Use**
  - ❑ Most transplant centers require patients to be abstinent from alcohol and pain medications for at least six months. If needed, counseling or treatment programs may be recommended.
- ✓ **Mental Health and Social Support**
  - ❑ A mental health evaluation helps ensure that the patient can handle the emotional and psychological stress of transplant and recovery. It is also important to ensure that family or friends are available to support the patient before and after surgery.

**It Can be a Long Process**

- ✓ The evaluation process can take several months. Once completed, the transplant team will meet to review the findings and decide whether you are a good candidate for a liver transplant.
- ✓ Transplant centers have different eligibility guidelines, including age restrictions. While you might not qualify for a transplant at one center, you may qualify at another. Most tests will transfer to another center, so keep good records of results. A new center will want to meet you and your caregiver.

**Additional Resources**

- ✓ AlphaNet's Big Fat Reference Guide (BFRG) has a large section devoted to liver health. Chapter 19 of the BFRG focuses on liver transplants. Anyone can access [AlphaNet's BFRG](#). AlphaNet Subscribers can access the BFRG through their [Subscriber Portal](#).
- ✓ AlphaNet has created several 1-page documents that focus on liver health, which are available [here](#).
- ✓ The Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients has a search engine with information about liver transplant centers and their success rates, which is available [here](#).