Heart Transplant Patient Information

When referred to UAB Medicine for a heart transplant, you will have an initial consult appointment with a transplant cardiologist. At this appointment, if it is determined that a heart transplant is an option, you will be scheduled for 3-5 days of outpatient testing at The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital. If you are hospitalized and too ill to be seen as an outpatient, your local doctor can discuss your case with UAB Medicine physicians. This doctor-to-doctor communication may lead to your transfer to UAB Hospital for an inpatient evaluation.

The Heart Transplant Clinic is housed 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 assist in getting you 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
Whether performed on an inpatient or outpatient basis, some or all of the following tests may be scheduled as part of your evaluation. 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)** requires 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) test requires that a small syringe of blood be drawn from the artery in your wrist.

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 evaluate 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 evaluate risk of infection or 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.