

# Frequently Asked Questions

## UPMC Lung Transplant Program

### 1. I would like to know if I can be listed for a lung transplant at UPMC. What do I need to do to get the process started?

Your doctor can refer you to the UPMC Lung Transplant Program, or you may refer yourself. Visit the UPMC website [UPMC.com/LungTransplant](http://UPMC.com/LungTransplant) for a patient referral form that lists what information is needed to be referred to the program. Information can be faxed to UPMC via a secure e-fax line at 412-864-5913.

### 2. Will my insurance cover the cost of a lung transplant?

Every insurance plan is different. We work with specialists called transplant credit analysts who can help you understand what parts of your medical care will be covered.

### 3. I don't have insurance. How much does a lung transplant cost?

The cost of a lung transplant can vary from patient to patient, depending on multiple factors. If a potential candidate wishes to discuss estimated cost, he or she will be given contact information for patient business services and a transplant credit analyst.

### 4. Am I too old for a lung transplant?

At UPMC, we consider the risks and benefits for each patient separately. All patients are considered on a case-by-case basis and age is one of many factors. In general, patients over age 70 must have a limited number of other medical problems to be candidates for lung transplant.

### 5. Do you have weight restrictions for a lung transplant?

To be scheduled for an evaluation, a candidate's BMI (body mass index) must be 35 or less. There is currently no minimum BMI requirement.

### 6. I quit smoking but I am still using e-cigarettes (or some other nicotine replacement product). Is that OK? How long do I need to be nicotine-free before I can get an evaluation? Before I can get listed?

To be scheduled for lung transplant evaluation, a candidate must be nicotine-free for a minimum of four months.

This includes all forms of nicotine: cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, nicotine patches, gum, or any other form of pharmaceutical nicotine. A candidate must also be free from all forms of vaping, including products that are reported to be nicotine free. A candidate must be nicotine-free for six months to be placed on the waiting list for lung transplantation.

### 7. I had a lung transplant evaluation at another center and was turned down. Would UPMC evaluate me for a lung transplant?

Our experts review the case of every patient who is referred to us. We will consider you for lung transplantation even if you have been previously turned down at a different center. UPMC can often use the results from testing done at other medical centers, but we require that you be seen by our physicians and the rest of our transplant team.

### 8. I had cancer. How many years do I have to be cancer free before I can get a transplant?

Patients with a history of cancer should be treated and cured of their cancer. We ask our patients to be at least five years from the end of their treatment. There are a couple of exceptions, including earlier stage or less aggressive malignancies such as: stage 1a colon cancer, intraductal breast cancer, prostate cancer, and superficial skin cancers. Patients with these types of cancer are evaluated individually.

### 9. What happens when I come for outpatient lung evaluation? What kinds of testing do I have to do?

The outpatient lung transplant evaluation takes four to five days to complete. It always starts on a Monday. In addition to consultations with members of the transplant team (pulmonologist, transplant surgeon, social worker, coordinator, etc.), the evaluation includes a lung transplant education class; special blood work; and diagnostic testing, including pulmonary function tests (PFTs), six-minute walking test, x-rays, and heart testing. The tests and consultations are done to determine if a lung transplant is an appropriate treatment option.

**10. My spouse and adult children all have full-time jobs. Can I come to the transplant evaluation by myself?**

No. We require all candidates to be accompanied by a primary caregiver. The evaluation is physically demanding, and it would be difficult for someone with lung disease to get from one appointment/test or location without assistance or help with their equipment. It is also important for the primary caregiver to attend the pre-transplant education class, meet with the members of the transplant team, and learn what to expect as a potential caregiver post-transplant. Being a caregiver is a big commitment, and the team will not advocate listing if a candidate does not have strong caregiver support.

**11. If I get listed for a lung transplant, do I have to live in Pittsburgh?**

We require our patients who are waiting for a lung transplant to be able to get to Pittsburgh within four hours. Many people drive, but some patients arrange private flights to Pittsburgh. Your social worker can give you more information about flights. If you are not able to get to Pittsburgh within four hours by car or flight, we ask that you move closer to our center.

**12. How long are the waiting times if I get listed?**

Waiting times are difficult to predict and highly variable, from a day to over a year. The average waiting time is a few months, but this time varies based on your clinical condition.

**13. What are your survival statistics?**

The median survival rate is approximately seven years after transplant and varies from a few days to more than 25 years.

**14. Does UPMC offer “bloodless” lung transplant surgery?**

UPMC does offer “bloodless” transplants for certain candidates. Strict medical requirements must be met. For candidates interested in this option, medical records are reviewed to determine whether the candidate meets the requirements for evaluation. Before the evaluation, a consultation is conducted via phone with the Bloodless Medicine team.

**15. Do you have an ex-vivo lung perfusion (EVLV) machine?**

Yes. UPMC has been a leading institution on the use of EVLP. We participated in the trials that led to FDA approval of this technology, which is now part of the standard of care offered to our patients.

**16. Are there opportunities for patients to participate in research studies?**

Because UPMC is an academic institution, new clinical trials are consistently being conducted. You might be asked to participate in one of these trials. Your physician can discuss this option with you. Participation in research studies is voluntary.

**17. Once I get a transplant, how long is the hospital stay?**

Most patients stay in the hospital for about three weeks. Depending on their condition before the transplant, some patients may need to stay longer.

**18. Do I have to live in Pittsburgh after the transplant? For how long?**

Patients who live within a two-hour drive of our hospital are able to return home after two weeks, depending on progress. Patients who live more than a two-hour drive from our transplant center must make arrangements to stay in Pittsburgh for an average of three months following their post-surgical discharge. The actual length of stay depends on the patient's progress.

**19. How often do I have to come back to Pittsburgh and how many times?**

You will be seen by your lung transplant doctor as frequently as every two weeks to three months for the first two years following your lung transplant. This will depend upon your progress and overall health. At each two-day visit you will:

- Meet with your lung transplant doctor
- Do pulmonary function tests, which measure how well your new lungs are working
- Have your blood work checked
- Get a chest x-ray
- Have a bronchoscopy, which is a procedure that uses a thin tube to look for infection and rejection in your new lungs

**20. After I go home, can I have my follow-up care with a local lung transplant center?**

Our team at UPMC will take care of you for at least the first two years following transplantation, and ideally for life. In some special circumstances, you may be able to find a local transplant center that can help take care of you.