

ASK THE EXPERT



LIVER DISEASE

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ABOUT THE EXPERT

The professionals at The Liver Institute at Methodist Dallas Medical Center believe that a multidisciplinary team approach is essential for successful patient outcomes. The Liver Institute is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary disease management center specializing in diseases of the liver, bile ducts, and pancreas, offering programs including liver transplantation, liver tumor program, hepatitis center, a hepatobiliary and pancreatic disorders clinic, general hepatology program, and clinical research program. The Liver Institute brings together a team of independently practicing physicians, leading clinicians, and researchers in the fields of hepatology, gastroenterology, oncology, interventional radiology, hepatobiliary-pancreatic surgery, and organ transplantation.

Will every person diagnosed with liver disease need a liver transplant at some point?

Not every person diagnosed with some form of liver disease will need a transplant. The vast majority of the liver transplants are performed in individuals with cirrhosis and signs of liver failure. Cirrhosis, or severe scarring of the liver, occurs typically after many years of ongoing inflammation and injury to the liver. This injury could be as a result of viruses such as chronic hepatitis C, toxins such as significant and repetitive alcohol consumption, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, or autoimmune liver diseases, to name a few causes.

What are the usual signs of liver failure?

Some of the most common signs of liver failure or severe liver dysfunction are jaundice (skin and eyes turning yellow), ascites (fluid accumulation in the abdomen), gastrointestinal bleeding from varices (enlarged veins in the esophagus and stomach), and encephalopathy (episodes of significant confusion, altered mental status that could even lead to a comatose state). Not all patients with cirrhosis will develop these complications, but those who do should be referred to an experienced transplant program such as the Liver Institute at Methodist Dallas.

Can patients with liver cancer receive a liver transplant?

Yes, patients with primary liver cancer can be candidates for liver transplant as long as the cancer meets specific criteria based on overall size, and with no signs of cancer spread elsewhere (metastasis). The Liver Institute at Methodist Dallas provides comprehensive multidisciplinary care of these patients. Management of liver cancer patients involves the most advanced and cutting edge therapies focusing on cure and prevention of further cancer progression of all individuals,

including those being evaluated for a liver transplant.

Can fatty liver lead to cirrhosis and needing a liver transplant?

Yes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease or fatty liver, as it is commonly referred to, can lead to cirrhosis. The inflammation and injury triggered by this condition typically does not cause symptoms in its early stages. Fatty liver is the most common liver disease in the U.S. and is associated to certain risk factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and elevated lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides). It is estimated that it will soon become the leading indication for liver transplant in the U.S. The Liver Institute at Methodist Dallas has ample resources and experienced clinicians to evaluate and treat those individuals with fatty liver. In addition, we have a successful research program with studies looking at new therapies that are focusing on delaying, stopping or regressing injury and scarring that results from fatty liver.

Is it possible to live a normal life after getting a transplant?

Successful organ transplantation helps by not only prolonging the life of the transplant recipient, but by improving the quality of life of that individual who was facing many limitations, including life-threatening ones, due to having one or more very diseased organs. The road to full recovery from transplantation and to re-establishing a good quality of life varies from patient to patient. At The Liver Institute of Methodist Dallas, we take pride of having excellent transplant outcomes, and not shying away from even the most challenging cases. While doing so, our aim is providing long-term, thorough, and compassionate care to our patients as well as guidance for them and their families.