

MOUNT ELIZABETH LIVER TRANSPLANT TEAM

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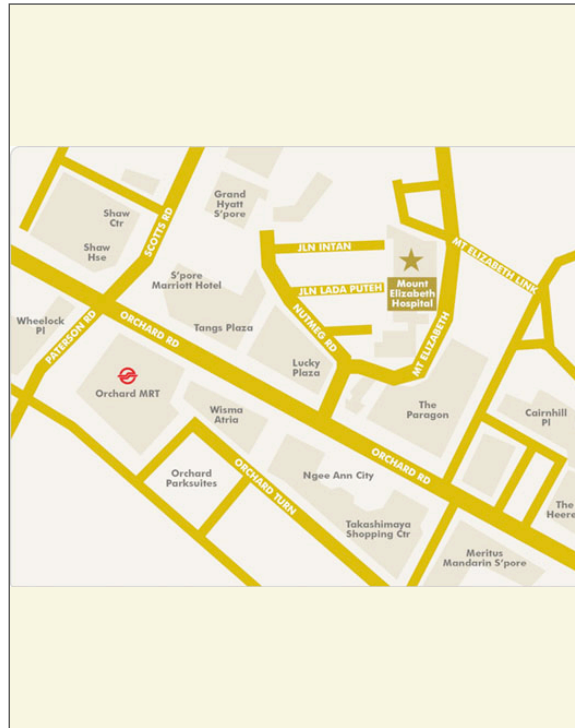
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LIVING DONOR LIVER TRANSPLANTS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

*Mount Elizabeth Hospital
Living Donor Liver Transplant Program
Singapore*

www.liversurgery.net

WHEN IS A LIVER TRANSPLANT NEEDED?

Liver Transplantation is needed for patients who are likely to die because of liver failure. Many diseases cause liver failure. The most common is cirrhosis, which is scarring and death of liver cells. Cirrhosis caused by hepatitis B or C is the most common reason for liver transplants.

Other conditions which may ultimately require a liver transplant include :-

- ✓ *Diseases of the bile ducts, which can cause liver failure if there is backup of bile in the liver*
- ✓ *Some inherited diseases, such as Wilson's disease, in which dangerous levels of copper build up in the body, and hemochromatosis, where the liver is overwhelmed by iron*
- ✓ *Primary liver cancer, or cancer that primarily affects only the liver*
- ✓ *Alcoholism, which can cause cirrhosis*

In a living donor transplantation, a segment of a healthy person's liver is transplanted into the sick patient. This can be done because the liver is the only organ that can regenerate itself. Both the donated lobe of liver and the remaining section of the donor liver will grow to a normal size within weeks.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A TRANSPLANT?

There are many people who need a liver transplant than there are livers available for donation. Living donation overcomes this problem. Patients are examined by a team of specialists to determine if a liver transplant is appropriate and likely to succeed. Any relative or spouse can be a donor.

Living Donor Liver Transplant-What you should know.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LIVING DONOR OPERATION?

A typical liver donation operation lasts between 5 to 8 hours. The recipient operation lasts anywhere between 6 to 18 hours depending on the complexity of the case. Usually both operations occur at the same time.

After the operation pain will be controlled with good anesthesia and usually most if not all patients experience very little or no pain. Donors are allowed to walk after the 3rd post-operative day. They are given a blood thinning agent to prevent clots in the leg from reaching the lungs. Most patients can start eating by the 3rd day after the operation. Most patients are discharged from hospital between the 7th to 10th day. Donors need to rest at home for at least a month. They will be followed up regularly in the clinic after discharge.

All patients will stay in the Intensive care unit for a few days before going to the ward. Patients may need to stay in the hospital up to a month. Both the donor and the recipient will have 24 hour access to the transplant team even on discharge should the need arise.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FOR LIVER TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS?

The biggest risks are rejection and infection. Rejection occurs when the body's immune system attacks the new liver as an unwanted foreign substance, just as it would attack a virus. To prevent rejection, transplant recipients must take drugs to suppress the immune system. However because the immune system is weakened, it is harder for liver transplant patients to fight other kinds of infections. Most infections can be treated with other drugs. Many liver transplant patients

have at least one episode of rejection or infection that requires readmission to hospital for treatment. After the first year, routine follow-up consists of annual checkup at the transplant hospital.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF A LIVER TRANSPLANT

These are caused by drugs used to treat or prevent rejection. These side effects can include fluid retention, raised blood pressure, headaches diarrhea, nausea and joint pain

WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR PATIENTS ?

The outlook for patients is often expressed as a five-year survival rate. This refers to the patients who are alive 5 years after their transplant. The 5-year survival rate for liver transplant patients is about 85%.

WHAT ARE LIFESTYLE CHANGES ASSOCIATED WITH LIVER TRANSPLANTS

Most patients return to a normal or near normal lifestyle 6 months to a year after transplant. Transplant recipients should avoid exposure to people with infections. Maintaining a balanced diet, getting regular exercise and staying on prescribed medications are important.

