

Chapter 6: Transplant Clinic

Location and Parking

The transplant clinic is located in the Heart Hospital on the Abbott Northwestern Hospital campus at South 10th Avenue and 27th Street in Minneapolis.

The transplant clinic is part of the Minneapolis Heart Institute Clinic on the second floor of the Heart Hospital.

Parking is available in the parking ramps, parking lots and on the street. Valet service is also available at the main entrance of Abbott Northwestern Hospital. Security escorts are available to walk you to your car.

Plan for Your Visit

The transplant clinic is open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Bring the following with you to each visit.

- **Bring all medicine bottles and your medicine list with you to each visit.**
- Bring your daily records (pages 100-102). Your doctor and transplant coordinator will look at them.
- Bring a list of questions you have.
- Bring a book or other activity to help pass the time. (You can plan to be at the clinic all morning.)

At your clinic visit, you can expect to:

- see the transplant cardiologist, the transplant coordinator and other doctors as needed
- talk about health care concerns and ask questions.

Clinic Routine

Clinic visits start no later than 3 months after your transplant.

- When you come to the clinic, please bring:
 - your medicines, medicine bottles and medicine list
 - daily records
 - insurance information.
- Arrive by 7:30 a.m. Go to the first floor Main Lab.
- Wait to take your medicines *after* the labs are drawn.
- Wear your mask when you come to the hospital and clinic for the first 3 months after your transplant.
- Register on the second floor of the Heart Hospital.
- Go to the transplant clinic. Take your medicines right away, unless you receive other instructions.
- Any scheduled tests, such as an echo or EKG, may be done at this time.
- The clinic assistants will check your weight, temperature, blood pressure, and review your medicines.
- You will have an exam.
- Your transplant doctor and coordinator will answer your questions and concerns.
- You may have changes in your medicines and your care plan at this time.
- You will be called the next day with:
 - the results of any tests or lab results
 - any changes to your medicines, if needed.

Heart Biopsy

A biopsy is a procedure in which your transplant cardiologist will take a tiny sample of your heart tissue. A sample will come from the inner surface (endocardium) of your heart. You may also hear this procedure called by its formal name, endomyocardial biopsy.

Purpose

This biopsy is the single most helpful test to tell if your body is rejecting your new heart. This test can help your cardiologist find rejection in its very early stage, even before you notice any symptoms.

The biopsy is done in the Catheterization Lab, on the third floor of the Heart Hospital. You will be awake for the procedure.

Procedure

Before the procedure

- You will wear a hospital gown.
- You will lie on an exam table.
- You may be given medicine to help you relax.
- Members of your care circle may wait in your room.

During the procedure

- Your neck will be cleaned with a special solution.
- The cardiologist will inject some numbing medicine into the skin over a vein in your neck.
- The cardiologist will insert a needle into your vein. He or she will put a bioptome through the needle. (This device will collect the tissue sample.)
- When the bioptome reaches the correct place, it will take small tissue samples.
- You may feel a fluttering or tugging in your chest during the procedure.
- The cardiologist will remove the needle and the bioptome.
- Gentle pressure will be placed on the needle insertion site to stop any bleeding. A small dressing or bandage will be put on the area.
- The health care team members will watch you closely.
- The biopsy takes about 30 minutes.

After the procedure

- You may have other tests needed. The transplant coordinator or one of your nurses will give your directions.
- The results of the biopsy will be known that same evening or the next day. The transplant coordinator will call you with the results.

Biopsy Schedule

You will have regular biopsies after surgery.
The schedule is:

- first month — every week
- 2 to 3 months — every 2 weeks
- 4 to 6 months — every 4 weeks
- 7 to 12 months — at the 9 month and 1 year
- after 1 year — as needed.

The above schedule is based on no rejection episodes.
If you have an episode of rejection, your transplant doctor will give you a new schedule.

Cardiac Biopsy Grading Scale

Your tissue samples will be graded on a scale:

- Grade 0 R:
 - no rejection
- Grade 1 R: mild rejection:
 - The sample shows lymphocytes (white blood cells) with up to 1 area of heart cell injury.
- Grade 2 R: moderate rejection:
 - The sample shows 2 or more areas of lymphocytes with heart cell damage.
- Grade 3 R: severe rejection:
 - The sample shows many areas of heart cell injury with other signs of heart cell damage.

Important

Apply pressure and call the transplant department right away if you have bleeding or swelling after a biopsy.

Risks of cardiac biopsy

The risks known with cardiac biopsy are low. However, tell the nurse or doctor know if you have any of these:

- shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- dizziness
- weakness.

Rarely, air can collect between your lungs and chest wall. This is why you may need a chest X-ray after a biopsy.

Yearly Evaluation

Every year, near the anniversary of your heart transplant, you will have a complete evaluation. You may have some or all of the following tests:

■ echocardiogram

- This is an ultrasound study of your heart, valves and the sac around your heart. The test uses sound waves to see how well your heart is working.

■ cardiac catheterization or angiogram

- This uses X-ray to look at your heart and arteries. Your cardiologist will be able to tell if your arteries are blocked or narrowed with plaque.
- Dye is injected into your bloodstream so your arteries show up well on the X-ray.
- You will need to lie on your back for 4 hours after this test.
- You will need to walk for 1 hour before you can go home.
- You will not be able to drive. You will need to have someone take you home and stay with you until the next morning.
- Results of the angiogram are available late the same day. You may need to stay in the hospital overnight if there are concerns with bleeding or how your heart is working.

Important

Your yearly transplant evaluation does not replace the physical exam you should schedule every year with your regular doctor. See Chapter 3, page 25 to learn more about your yearly physical exam.

- **electrocardiogram (EKG)**

- This painless test checks the electrical activity of your heart.

- **bone mineral density test**

- This is an X-ray to see how thick your bones are.

These tests are usually scheduled over a 2-day period. You will receive a letter confirming your appointment dates and times. Depending on your health, you may need more tests.

What You Need To Write Down

Keeping track of your weight, blood pressure, heart rate and temperature are important. This may be difficult at first, but when you make this a routine, it will become easier.

Choose a time of day for the check. Write down the results so you can keep track of your progress. This will also help your health care team if you start to have problems.

Call the transplant office at 612-863-5638 if you have changes in each area listed below.

Weight

What to do

- Weigh yourself every morning.
- Weigh yourself at the same time.
- Use the same scale.
- Wear the same amount of clothing every time you weigh yourself.

When to call

Call the transplant office if you:

- gain more than 3 pounds overnight
- gain more than 4 pounds in 1 week.

Blood pressure

What to do

- Take your blood pressure each morning and evening.
- Take your blood pressure any time you have a headache.
- You may sit or stand. Make sure if you stand for the morning check, you stand for the afternoon check.

When to call

Call the transplant office if your:

- top (systolic) number is more than 160
- bottom (diastolic) number is more than 100.

Pulse (heart rate)

What to do

- Take your pulse every time you check your blood pressure.
- Do not take right after you exercise.

When to call

Call the transplant office if your pulse is:

- more than 120 beats per minute
- less than 60 beats per minute
- not regular.

Temperature

What to do

- Take your temperature every evening.
- Use the same thermometer every time.
- Do not take your temperature right after you exercise.

When to call

Call the transplant office if your temperature:

- is more than 100.5 F.

Keep track of your numbers on the Daily Record Sheet.

Bring your daily records with you to every clinic appointment.