

## **Liver Transplant**

### **What is a liver transplant?**

A liver transplant (otherwise known as a hepatic transplant) is the surgical removal of a damaged or diseased liver, which is then replaced with a healthy liver from a deceased donor. Sometimes a living donor may donate part of their healthy liver if a partial amount of liver is enough to repair any damage.

### **Who can benefit from having liver transplant surgery?**

If the liver has been irreversibly damaged or suffered failure from infection, drugs or alcohol, it may need to be replaced. If untreated, this can result in acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term) liver disease, hepatitis, malnutrition, blood clotting, cirrhosis (scarring and death of the liver cells), cancer and defects in the bile ducts - among others. For these reasons, an individual may need to undergo liver transplant surgery.

### **Procedure**

Liver transplant surgery is performed under general anesthetic, meaning you will be asleep during the operation. An incision is made into the upper abdomen and tubes fitted to help drain any excess blood and fluid that surrounds the liver. The damaged liver is removed, and the new liver placed into the abdomen and attached to the surrounding blood vessels and bile ducts. The incision is then closed; however, some or all of the drainage tubes may be left in place to continue to drain excess fluid.

### **Recovery period**

Following liver transplant surgery, you will need to stay in hospital for between 2-3 weeks. You will be frequently monitored and undergo regular blood and urine tests to observe your bodies reaction to the new liver. Your physician will discuss how long you need to wait before returning to your daily routine (including work and exercise), which will be a slow build-up until you fully recover. Medication will be administered and you will be taught how to take this before returning home. Be aware that you will need to visit your physician 1-2 times per week for the first three months following surgery. Survival rates following liver transplant surgery are around 90% for the first year, and around 75% for five years.

### **Risks**

Liver transplant surgery does carry some risks. These include rejection of the liver, bleeding, infection, fluid build-up, high blood pressure, leaking bile ducts, kidney damage, blood clotting, return of the original disease and cancer - among others.