

Patient and Family Fact Sheet: New Immunologic Assays and Immunosuppression Withdrawal

George V. Mazariegos MD

Patients and families of children who have undergone a liver transplant frequently ask about the latest developments in liver transplantation and how these may apply to them or to their child. Two areas of recent interest are **new immunologic tests** that are available and the possibility of **drug withdrawal**.

Below are frequently asked questions about these two areas of interest and information so you know how you or your child can get involved.

Immunologic tests

What are these tests?

With the help of investigators at the Institute and around the country, we have designed simple blood tests that may help determine why some patients need more immunosuppression and some need less.

These tests measure different immune cell types, the patient's genetic ability to cause immune reactions, and the patient's immune reactions to their new liver.

What is involved?

- The tests need to be drawn at a visit in Pittsburgh, preferably Monday–Wednesday.
- The blood tests can be drawn with your usual blood work.
- We need **three weeks notice** prior to scheduling your tests.
- These tests may be of benefit to **ALL** patients, both those who need less drugs as well as those who have needed more because of past rejection.

How can my child or I participate?

Call your transplant coordinator at 412-648-3200 and schedule a visit.

Immunosuppression Withdrawal

Some patients are candidates for drug withdrawal after liver transplantation.

Immunosuppression is weaned as part of our ongoing clinical efforts to minimize the complications of immune suppressants. Weaning of immunosuppression is tailored individually to each patient.

What are the criteria for considering drug withdrawal?

Although some patients may require drug withdrawal due to infections or other *emergency* indications, criteria for *elective* drug withdrawal include:

- Normal liver function.
- No history of autoimmune liver disease
- Ability and willingness to obtain more frequent blood work after changes in immunosuppression
- A liver biopsy may be recommended if there is a significant change in liver numbers or at certain points in the drug withdrawal process.

**More questions? Call your transplant coordinator at 412-648-3200
or Dr. Mazariegos at 412-692-6110 or email him at mazarieg@pitt.edu**