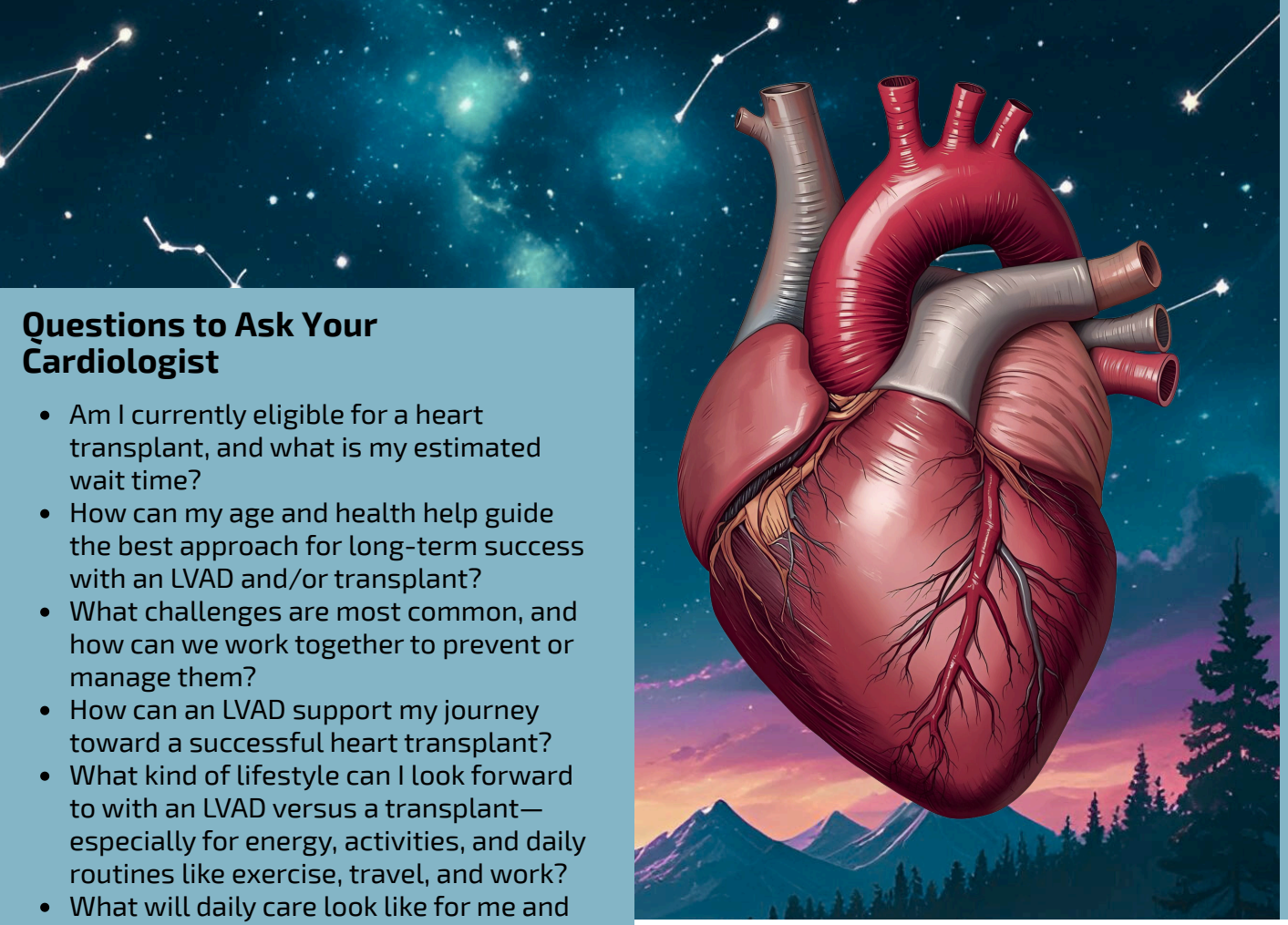

Questions to Ask Your Cardiologist

- Am I currently eligible for a heart transplant, and what is my estimated wait time?
- How can my age and health help guide the best approach for long-term success with an LVAD and/or transplant?
- What challenges are most common, and how can we work together to prevent or manage them?
- How can an LVAD support my journey toward a successful heart transplant?
- What kind of lifestyle can I look forward to with an LVAD versus a transplant—especially for energy, activities, and daily routines like exercise, travel, and work?
- What will daily care look like for me and my caregiver with an LVAD versus after a transplant, and how can we make it manageable?
- What are the typical long-term outcomes for people with an LVAD and for those who receive a transplant?
- What supportive resources—like physical therapy, mental health care, or social work—are available to help me thrive through every stage?
- What is your center's experience and success rate for an LVAD implantation and heart transplantation?
- Can you share your center's experience and success stories of other people like me?

Contact Us

If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

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Discussion Guide for Patients & Caregivers

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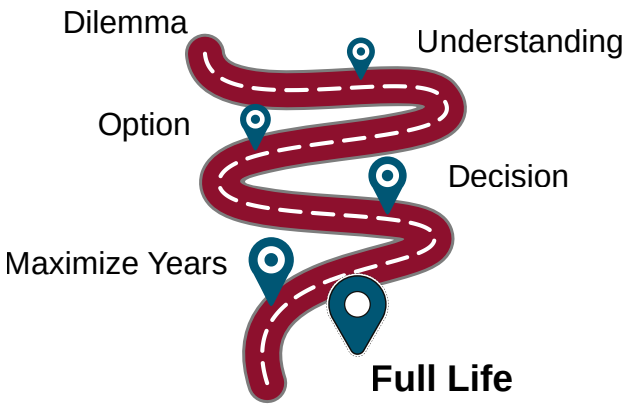


The Young Adult Dilemma

For patients under 50, an immediate heart transplant isn't always the best long-term answer.

Here's why:

Finite Lifespan: A transplanted heart has an average lifespan of about 12 years for patients under 50[1].

The Second Transplant Problem: Since you still have many years ahead, people who receive a second heart transplant usually face more complications and have shorter lifespans than those who only receive one.

Long-Term Conditions Can Arise: Due to immunosuppression, heart transplant recipients are more likely to develop cancers, kidney failure and infections.

Waiting is a Risk: Without a mechanical device like an LVAD (Left Ventricular Assist Device), waiting for a donor heart can often mean long-term deterioration of your health and quality of life.

[1]Meyer DM , Nayak A, Wood KL, et al. The Society of Thoracic Surgeons Intermacs 2024 Annual Report: Focus on Outcomes in Younger Patients. Ann Thorac Surg. 2025;119(1):34-58

What is an LVAD?

An LVAD is a machine that helps your heart pump blood when it's too weak to do it by itself. Some people use an LVAD while waiting for a heart transplant, and others use it as long-term treatment. Your doctor can help you decide if an LVAD is right for you based on your health and heart condition.

New Option for Younger Heart Failure Patients

If you are under age 50 living with severe heart failure, your doctors are looking for ways to give you the longest, healthiest life possible by using life-saving heart devices. In younger patients with severe heart failure, instead of rushing into a heart transplant, they often first use an LVAD. The LVAD helps the weak heart pump blood, allowing the patient to live well for several more years.

Why an LVAD can be a Solution

Exceptional Survival: Patients under 50 who get an LVAD have a strong survival rate — more than 70% are still alive after five years[1]. That's almost the same as patients who get a heart transplant, with about 75% surviving five years[2].

Reduced Complications: The latest LVADs use a technology called Full MagLev (short for Magnetic Levitation) in the pump. This design reduces friction, which greatly lowers the chances of stroke and blood clots compared to older pumps.

Quality of Life: The LVAD can give people a lot more energy and strength, helping them go back to work, travel, and be more active in their daily lives.

[2]Kilic A, Weiss ES, Yuh DD, Shah AS, Conte JV. Factors associated with 5-year survival in older heart transplant recipients. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2012;143(2):468-474. doi:10.1016/j.jtcvs.2011.10.036

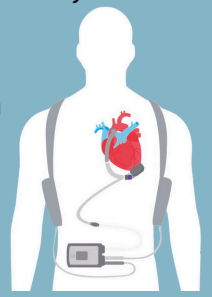
Making the Decision

The goal is to wait to do a heart transplant until the patient is older. This way, the patient can benefit from the LVAD for many years. When they finally receive the new heart, they are closer to a normal lifespan with it. This approach helps the patient get the most healthy years from both the LVAD and the transplant, while avoiding the higher risks of a second transplant or long-term side effects from immune-suppressing drugs.

Maximize Your Years

- **Stop Deterioration:** An LVAD can immediately improve your heart function and overall health.
- **Delay the Clock:** You postpone your heart transplant, saving it for when you truly need it in the future.
- **Potential Recovery:** In some cases, the LVAD can provide a break that allows your own heart to recover function, potentially making transplant unnecessary.

Personalized plan



HeartMate 3™ Left Ventricular Assist System (LVAS), image, copyright owned by Abbott

Choosing between an LVAD, a transplant, or medical therapy is personal, decided by a team of specialists, and can change over time. A personalized plan is based on your health and long-term goals. It's designed around you: your condition, your lifestyle, and what matters most. Your medical team reviews your tests, risks, home support, and priorities to help choose the best next step. This could include medicines, lifestyle changes, cardiac rehab, an LVAD, or planning for a transplant.