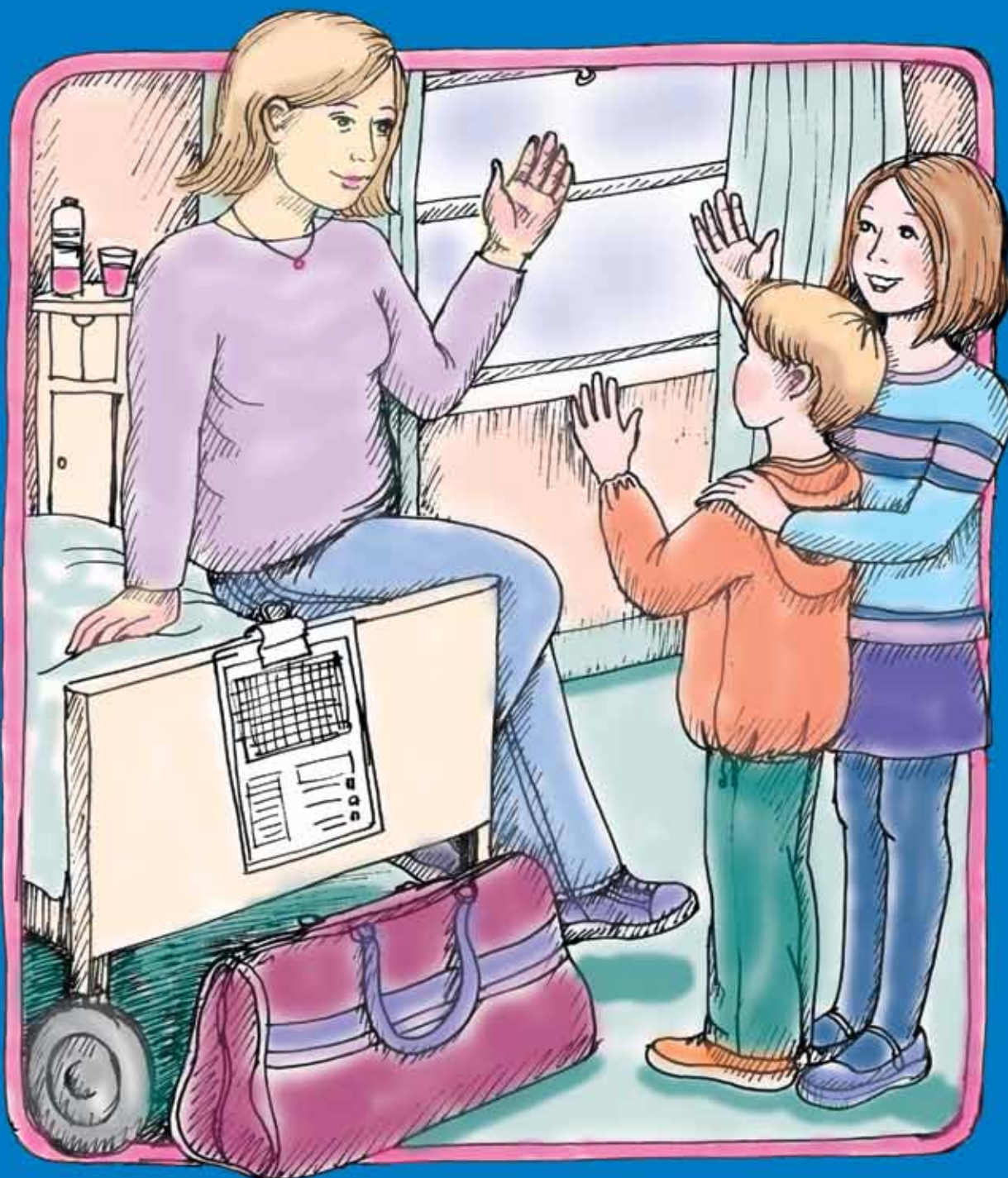


Getting a New Liver...

for my Mum or Dad

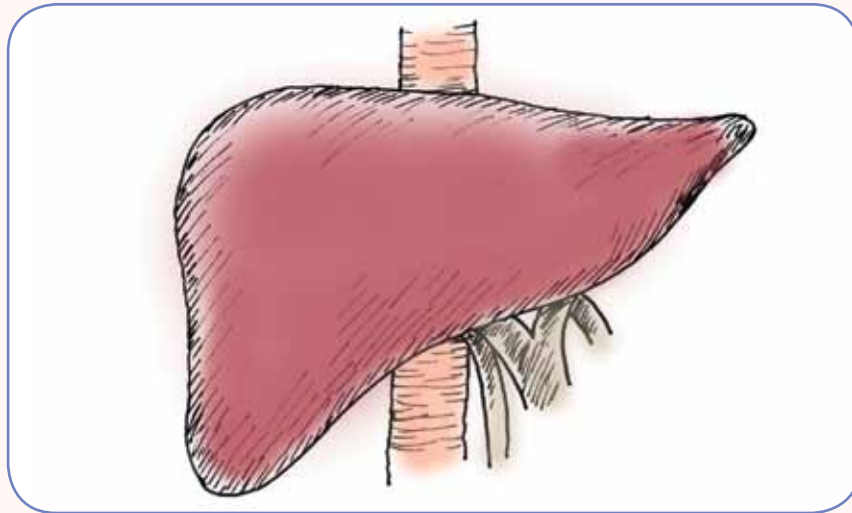


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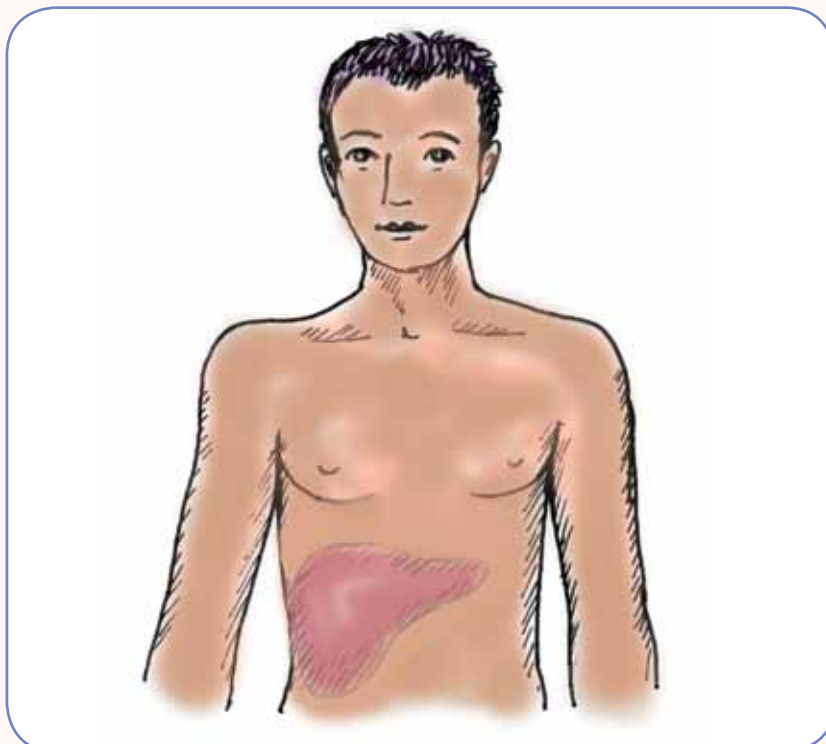
Getting a New Liver for Mum or Dad

Your mum or dad need to be in hospital for a while to have some tests because their liver is making them feel poorly. The liver is an important organ inside our body and it is like a small factory.

**This is a picture of the liver.
It is the biggest organ in our body.**



This is where it is inside our body.



The liver has a lot of work to do:

- 1.** It changes the food into chemicals for growth and repair of cells.
- 2.** It helps give you lots of energy.
- 3.** It makes proteins that are important to help the body stay healthy and working well.
- 4.** It gets rid of waste products.
- 5.** It helps to stop lots of big bruises and nose bleeds.
- 6.** The liver makes a green/yellow liquid called bile. This goes from the liver into our intestine to help digest the fat in our food.

So when mum or dad's liver is not working you might see:

- 1.** Yellow eyes and skin. This is because the bile liquid is not leaving the liver very well.
- 2.** Itching, this is because the skin is very yellow.
- 3.** A big tummy, this is because the liver is swollen and has extra fluid around it.
- 4.** Mum or Dad might not be able to do as much as you want because they are very tired.
- 5.** You might notice their hands are very pink.
- 6.** You might notice bruises on the body. This is because the liver is not making enough chemicals to help the blood clot. Bruises can happen from very small knocks, and they might also have bad nose bleeds.

Liver Transplant

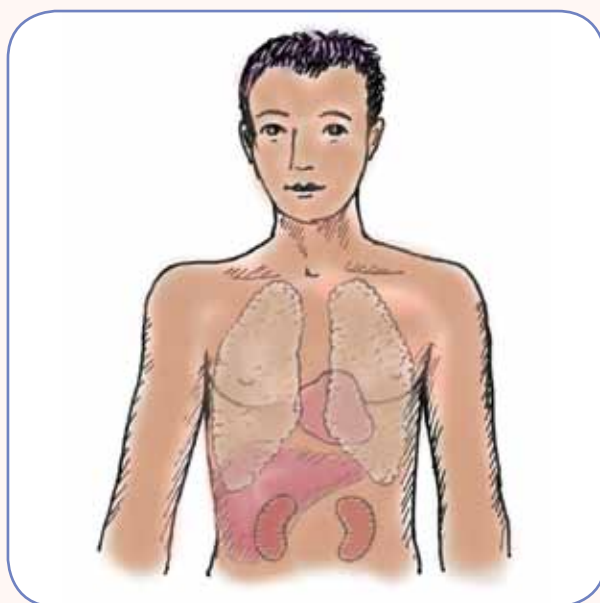
The staff on the Liver Unit will be trying to find out what is making your mum or dad's liver to be poorly. They will be having a number of tests. They will try and find medicines to help them feel a little better.

When the liver is very poorly and no other treatment can be given to help your mum or dad, the doctors will ask them if they want a liver transplant.

The poorly liver is removed and a healthy liver is put in its place. This is called **TRANSPLANTATION**.

As this is a big operation, the doctors need to make sure that your mum or dad's heart, kidneys, and lungs are working. This will help the new liver to settle in.

This is where they all are in the body.



Your mum or dad will have to stay in hospital for between 5 to 12 days. During this time your mum or dad will meet many people who will talk with them about what having a new liver means.

It is important your mum or dad knows all about this before they agree to have a transplant.

These are some of the people you might meet when your mum or dad are in hospital

Nurses : Both male and female nurses work on the ward. The nurse in charge is called a sister if they are a woman and a charge nurse if they are a man. They will care for your mum or dad.

Doctors : There will be lots of different doctors looking after your mum or dad. The senior doctor is called a consultant.

Dietician : This person will talk to your mum or dad about the best food to give them energy and make them feel stronger. They might need to eat different food to you for a while.

Physiotherapist : The physiotherapist will help your mum or dad get back their strength after the operation by giving exercises to help make your mum or dad's legs and arms feel stronger and also to help with their breathing.



Social worker : This person will talk with your mum or dad to see if there are any particular problems and sometimes can help with money problems.

Pharmacist : This is the person who will talk with your mum or dad about medicines and tablets and make sure they have their own supply. Your mum or dad will need to take quite a lot of medicines when they come out of hospital.

Chaplain : This is a person who will come and provide support and may spend time talking.

Transplant Coordinator : This person will talk to your mum or dad about liver transplantation and all the things involved with the waiting list and the operation and life after a transplant.

The Liver Transplant Waiting List

When the doctors and nurses have done all their tests and talked to your mum or dad and they agree to the transplant, their name will go onto a Liver Transplant Waiting List. This is a list of names of all the other people waiting for a new liver. This is kept by the Transplant Coordinator.

Most people have to wait at home for their new liver. This is because we need to find the right liver. We have to match up the right blood group and find the right sized liver. Your mum or dad will have a bleep to carry with them so that the Transplant Coordinator can speak to them at any time.



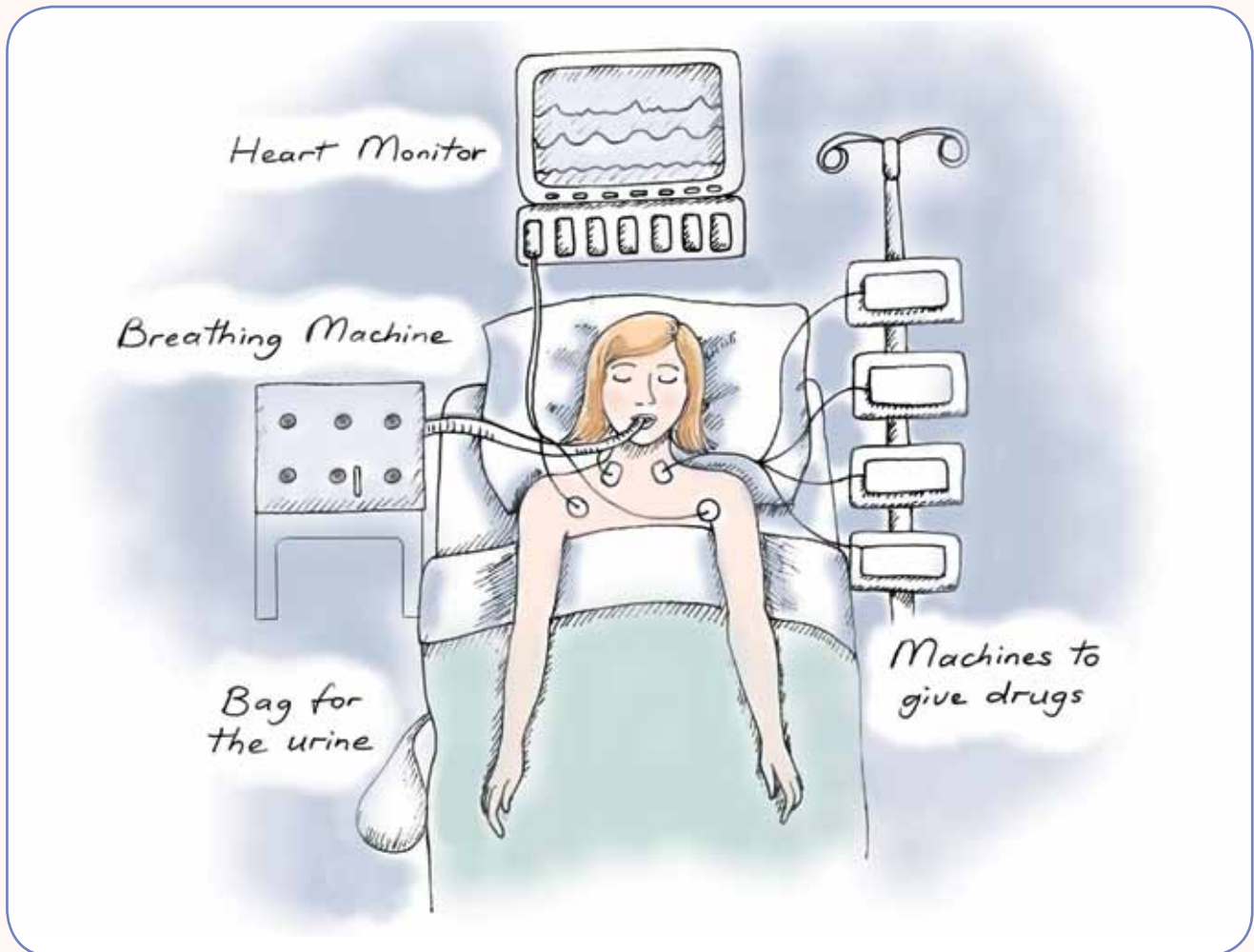
When we think we have a new liver for your mum or dad, the Transplant Coordinator will phone them at home or bleep them if they are out.

It will then be important that your mum or dad goes straight to the hospital. They will go to ward East 3 Liver Unit and they will be seen by a nurse, a doctor, and a transplant coordinator.

Your mum or dad will make sure that there is someone to care for you at this time and you will be able to visit your mum or dad after the operation. You can talk about the best times to visit with your family.

The Transplant Operation

Your mum or dad's liver transplant will take a long time (maybe 5-8 hours). They will be fast asleep all the time and have nice dreams. Afterwards, your mum or dad will be looked after in the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU).



What is the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU)?

All people who have a liver transplant are looked after on the Intensive Care Unit. This is a special ward where people who have had big operations go back to rest. Because your mum or dad's body needs to recover from the operation, some of the jobs usually done by the body like breathing and weeing will be helped by tubes and machines. They will be on a ventilator (breathing machine) for a while. A special nurse will stay by your mum or dad. The nurse will talk and explain things to you if you go to visit. There will also be Doctors looking after your mum or dad. They will go to see them in the morning and the evening and at other times if needed.

The Liver Unit Ward - W3LU

When your mum or dad are awake and feeling a bit better, they will move onto a bigger ward called West 3 Liver Unit. Here they will be able to get up and out of bed and begin to walk around again. They will also be able to start eating and drinking.

Visiting times on the ward are 10:00 in the morning until lunchtime and again at 3:00pm to 8:00pm in the evening. If you want to visit there is a quiet room just off the ward that is better to sit and speak to your mum or dad.

If you want to bring a present or card for your mum or dad that is fine or something nice to eat. Flowers are not allowed on the ward because the water gets dirty and can cause some infections, but your mum or dad will be able to have them at home.

If you cannot visit your mum or dad because you are so far away from the hospital, or you have to go to school, you can keep in touch by talking on the phone, or writing a letter or recording a message on to a tape for your mum or dad. When your mum or dad are feeling a little bit better they will be able to phone you too.



Medicines

After a big operation like a Liver Transplant, your mum or dad will have to take medicines every day in the morning and evening. The main medicine is **Tacrolimus** which helps prevent their body trying to get rid of their new liver ('rejection').

What is Rejection?

Rejection is a normal thing that happens in the body due to the immune system knowing that the new liver isn't part of mum or dad's body, and doing its job of trying to get rid of it.

The Immune System

The immune system is part of the body's way of fighting infections. It is mainly made up of white cells in the blood. **Tacrolimus** works against some white cells whose job it is to try to damage things like transplant organs and viruses that aren't part of the body itself. Tacrolimus stops these cells working well and helps the body to accept the new liver.

What can be done if rejection happens?

The doctors can give other medicines for a few days, like Prednisolone. This helps to stop the liver being rejected. It is usually quite easy to treat rejection.

What if the transplant doesn't work?

Most mums and dads **do** get better after their transplant, but some mums and dads will be so poorly that the doctors and nurses won't be able to make them get better, and they may die.

Infections

After a Liver Transplant because your mum or dad are taking lots of different medicines their body is more likely to pick up an infection. So while they are in hospital if they have a temperature we need to find where the infection is and give antibiotics to get rid of the infection. Also, when they go home if friends of yours have infections, or chicken pox, it might be better if they don't visit for a while, until your mum or dad is feeling better.



Going Home

When the doctors feel your mum or dad is well enough, they will be able to come home. Your help at home will be very important. There may be lots of things you could do to help. It will be important that your mum or dad gets rest when they go home. It is also important that they are up and about and getting exercise too. However, they will still be very tired and it will take a little while for them to get back to 'normal'.

You may feel happy and relieved to have your mum or dad safely back at home. You may also feel a bit confused, sad or angry. Or maybe your brother or sister behaves in a way that is upsetting to you or your parents. It might be an unsettling time for you all. It can help to talk about how you are feeling with someone. Sometimes it's difficult to find the words to describe how you feel, that's okay. Chat to someone, many children find it helps!

Outpatients Clinic

After the transplant your mum or dad will be seen by the doctors at the Liver Unit in Birmingham every week for the first 4-6 weeks. This will get less in time. When your mum or dad comes to the Liver Clinic they will have some blood tests to see how well their liver is working. They will be weighed to see if they have put weight on and they will have their blood pressure checked. They will then go and talk to the doctors, about how they are recovering.

Sometimes your mum or dad might need to come back into hospital for a short stay and have tests.

The Future

The reason your mum or dad had a Liver Transplant was to make them feel better so that your family can do normal things. You will be able to do lots of things with your mum or dad that you weren't able to do when they were poorly, like:

- **Playing sports** • **Helping with the shopping** •
- **Going to visit friends**
- **Going on holiday** • **Going swimming**



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