

# Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute

## Saint Luke's VAD Program

Answers to  
frequently asked  
questions about  
patient care

Left Ventricular Assist Devices (LVADs) have been FDA approved for use in the United States since 1994. And today, Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute is the only Destination Therapy VAD program in the greater Kansas City region.

**For patient referral, call 816-932-3264.**

### Who is a good candidate for VAD placement?

Patients with advanced heart failure who have been on maximum medical therapy and those who do not qualify for heart transplant are typically good candidates for an LVAD. Multiple factors are evaluated prior to VAD placement to ensure optimal outcomes.

### Which heart failure patients should I refer for VAD evaluation?

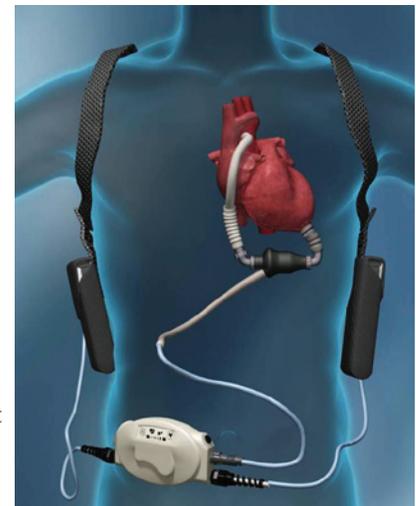
Patients with one or more of the following:

- Class III - IV heart-failure symptoms
- Na <136, BUN >40mg or Cr >1.5
- Worsening renal function with diuretics
- ACE/ARB/BB intolerance
- Diuretic resistance
- One or more heart failure admissions in the past 6 months
- No clinical improvement with CRT
- Reasonable potential for functional lifestyle

### How does an LVAD work?

The device is implanted to take over the pumping ability of the weakened heart's left ventricle. The pump is placed just below the diaphragm, and blood flows from the apex of the left ventricle through the device and

is returned to the aorta. An external, wearable system that includes a controller and batteries is attached via an external driveline. The device must always be attached to a power source. The LVAD is an axial flow device that delivers continuous flow; therefore, the patient will not have a (palpable) pulse.



## What are the benefits of LVAD placement?

**Survival** – Major clinical studies have shown LVAD placement provides long-term survival up to six-times greater than medical therapy alone.

**Quality of life** – Patients are free to live their lives as they choose and are not held back by heart failure symptoms. Many patients improve from a NYHA class IV to a class I or II and are able to participate in activities they have not been able to do for years.

## What are the risks of LVAD placement?

Bleeding, stroke, risks associated with long-term anticoagulation, right-sided heart failure, and infection are all potential risks of LVAD placement.

## What are the lifestyle changes required with LVAD placement?

- A person may not submerge themselves in water (no swimming, hot tubs or baths). A person can shower using a specialized bag that protects the external components of the device.
- A person must be able to tolerate anticoagulation.
- A person must have a strong supportive caregiver to assist with dressing changes and device management in the immediate postoperative period.
- Women may not become pregnant while the LVAD is in place due to probable dislodgment of the device with the growing fetus (and the need to take warfarin).
- A person cannot participate in contact sports.
- A person may not have a MRI.

## Early referral = improved outcomes



**Fast access to  
Kansas City's leading  
heart care experts**

**A Leader in heart care** Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute is locally and nationally renowned for leading the field in clinical areas such as heart transplant, health economics and outcomes research, preventive cardiology, cardiovascular imaging, interventional cardiology, advanced minimally invasive structural heart repair, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, and heart failure treatment.

Saint Luke's heart and vascular program features one of the 10 largest heart transplant programs in the nation and the only adult heart transplant center in the Kansas City area. The center staffs one of the largest teams of cardiologists and surgeons in the region and offers patients access to more than 130 clinical trials. ♦



**For more information  
Nurse Coordinators/Cardiologists  
816-932-3264  
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday – Friday**

**Doctors' One Call  
877-932-6200 (toll-free)  
24-hours per day**

[saintlukeshealthsystem.org](http://saintlukeshealthsystem.org)