Having a lung transplant is a very expensive process. Although the cost of the surgery itself is covered, there are many costs that someone having this surgery must be prepared to pay for themselves. It is important for potential recipients to consider what their plan might be for funding these associated costs.

This section gives a general idea of the major costs involved and provides some ideas about how to raise the needed funds.

**What is covered by Alberta Health and Wellness/NWT Health and Social Services?**

For residents of Alberta, all the tests done in hospital, appointments with health care professionals, the surgery itself, and the stay in hospital after the surgery are paid for by the Provincewide Service program through Alberta Health and Wellness.

In Alberta, Provincewide Services also provides coverage for the cost of immunosuppression medications for recipients of organ transplant.

In the NWT, you must be eligible for extended health benefits in order to be considered for drug coverage.
What is not covered?
In Alberta, The Provincwide Service program pays for anti-rejection medications only. All other medications needed to treat side effects from the anti-rejection drugs or other conditions will need to be paid for by either your private insurance or by yourself.

In the NWT, if you are a non aboriginal all your medications must be paid for by yourself, or by your extended benefits, if you are eligible, or your private insurance. You should contact your insurance company to determine which medications will be covered. If you are First Nations or Inuit then you will be covered by FNIHB benefits. Please call your local Health or Band office, or the regional FNIHB Office for more information.

Private health insurance plans often require you to share the cost of prescription drugs. The part you pay is called a co-payment or deductible and neither Alberta Health and Wellness nor NWT Health and Social Services covers this expense.

You will be required to purchase personal medical equipment (detailed in a later section). The cost for this equipment is not covered by Alberta Health and Wellness or NWT Health and Social Services.

Any costs to travel to and stay in a city where the transplant centre is located are not paid for by the provincial/territorial government. You will also require transportation to and from the hospital, as well as parking. You will be required to have a pager or cell phone on you at all times while you are on the waitlist so that you can be notified if a suitable organ has been found. This is not covered. You will require a long term support person and their potential lost wages will not be compensated by the program either. Speak to the social worker about yours and your support persons’ financial concerns.

Are there assistance programs available?
Under the Canada Health Act, the Federal Government has the responsibility for funding health care services for certain groups including: the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), First Nations and Inuit, and inmates of federal prisons. Persons in one of these categories may be eligible for medical travel benefits and medication coverage that is not provided by the provincial/territorial government (see below).

The First Nations and Inuit Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (FNIHB) covers medical travel expenses and prescription medications for eligible First Nations or Inuit. For more information contact the local Health or Band office, the regional FNIHB Office, or visit Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca.

Current members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) may be eligible for medical travel benefits and medication coverage. Members should contact their human resources department for details.

Former members of the CAF and RCMP may be eligible for benefits through Veterans Affairs. Benefits may be also be available to members/former members who have a disability related to their work. For more information, contact Veterans Affairs Canada 1-866-522-2122 www.vac-acc.gc.ca

The Lung Association, Alberta & NWT Lung Transplant Assistance Program provides a gift basket to those with the most dire need of financial support. This program provides some funding for necessities like accomodations and food. Transportation, parking, and driving costs may also be covered depending on need through this program. Applications are made on behalf of lung transplant recipients (or candidates) by the social worker through the Lung Transplant Services Department at the University of Alberta Hospital. 1-888-566-5864 www.ab.lung.ca
Federal government employees covered by the Public Service Care Plan should check with their human resources to check on medical travel benefits and medication coverage.

What expenses should I expect?
You will face some major expenses before, during, and after a lung transplant. If you do not reside in Edmonton or surrounding area you will likely have two homes to maintain post surgery and it is likely that neither you, nor your support person, will be working during the time spent in Edmonton. The length of the waiting period is impossible to predict, and if there are complications after the transplant, you may be living near the transplant centre for much longer than the usual 3 months post-surgery.

This section describes some of the major costs you should expect, but there are likely other smaller costs that will accumulate over time. The transplant program will provide you with more information on housing and relocation when you come for the assessment and meet the social worker.

DATS is a public transportation system available to those who cannot use the Edmonton Transportation System. Once you have had your surgery you will be unable to use public transportation to prevent your exposure to infection (colds or viruses). This service is available to non-Edmonton residents who are living in Edmonton temporarily. For more information DATS can be contacted at (780) 496-4567 or www.edmonton.ca/transportation and follow the Facilities and Accessibility link to Accessibility & DATS link.

Assessment Phase and six week physiotherapy program
There is a week long assessment for all potential recipients at the University of Alberta Hospital Transplant Program. This is to ensure that you are a candidate. You will have a variety of tests and procedures and will also meet with a number of members of the transplant team for other interviews. Once the assessment is complete the team will meet to discuss your eligibility for lung transplant.

If you are thought to be a suitable candidate you will be required to participate in a six-week pre-transplant physiotherapy program in Edmonton. Those not living in the Edmonton area will have to travel to the city for this 6 week period. Methods of transportation will vary depending on the distance you are planning to travel, your medical condition, the length of your stay, and your financial situation.

If you do not have friends or family in the area, you and your support person will likely have to stay in a hotel or some other type of accommodation. You will likely eat out during the weeks of testing. Again, these are costs that will not be covered.

Most people choose to stay close to the hospital to make it easier to get to and from test appointments. Talk to a travel agent or search the internet for a hotel/motel/bed & breakfast close to the hospital. Keep in mind that large hotels in the heart of major cities can be expensive. Call the hotel directly and ask if they have any special rates. Some hotels close to the transplant centre may offer a discount to people travelling for medical tests. When you are in Edmonton for your assessment you will meet with the social worker who will also provide you with some information and resources related to your stay in the city.
During the Waiting Period and After Surgery
You must always be within two to three hours travel time (by land or air) of the hospital during the waiting period so you can get there quickly when donor lungs become available. You will need to stay near the transplant centre for at least 3 months following the transplant. Most people choose to live close to the transplant hospital to make it easier to attend the daily appointments at the hospital. You may also feel more secure being within a short distance from the hospital during the waiting time should any other complications arise.

As a lung transplant candidate, you have to be very careful that you do not contract any lung infections before or after the surgery. The risk for infection is higher once the surgery is complete due to the anti-rejection medications. For this reason, the transplant centre specialists do not want you living in a place where you will be sharing space with a lot of people. Avoid public transportation (such as a bus, streetcar, subway) during this time for the same reason, DATS bus service is available in Edmonton and may be more appropriate for your situation.

Most people waiting for a lung transplant will rent an apartment that they will share only with their support person. If your support person is your spouse, you may want to rent a one-bedroom apartment, otherwise, you will likely need one with two bedrooms. Apartments in major cities can be very expensive. You can expect to pay at least $1500 to $2000 per month to rent a furnished apartment in the university area. The rent may or may not include heat, depending on the building. You may have to pay first and last month’s rent or a security deposit, and some places require you to sign a lease.

Please note some of these items may be funded through charitable groups, ask your transplant social worker for details.
You will also be paying for groceries and other things such as electricity, phone, transportation, and other personal expenses. By living close to the hospital you may avoid the need for a car and related expenses.

If you require home oxygen before the surgery that is covered by a private health insurance plan or government plan you will need to ensure that your provider will be able to accommodate you in Edmonton. Contact your home oxygen provider for more information about costs and how to arrange to have the oxygen set up in another city.

You will be required to purchase:

- a device called a micro-spirometer that is used to monitor your lung function every day at home after the transplant. This devise is usually available from the lung transplant team at the University of Alberta Hospital at a cost of $600.00,
- a MedicAlert bracelet at a cost of approximately $100.00 for the first year and $40.00 / yr after that,
- a digital thermometer at a cost of approximately $20.00
- a digital weigh scale at a cost of approximately $40.00
- and a digital blood pressure cuff at a cost of approximately $100.00.

There is a possibility you may require other additional equipment. The cost for all of this equipment is not covered by Alberta Health and Wellness nor most health insurance plans.

Long term follow up after the transplant
You will remain in hospital for approximately one month following the transplant. During this time you will require a consistent support person(s). Assuming there are no complications during this one month period, you will be discharged from the hospital, and will need to remain in the Edmonton area for a minimum of two additional months. Once you are discharged and have gone home you will continue to come back to the transplant centre at varying times so that the team can ensure you are doing well. Frequency of clinic appointments will vary between patients.

Monthly bloodwork can be done at a local lab, but you may have some travel costs depending on where you live.