Michelle Trachtenberg Underwent a Liver Transplant Months Before Death

Sources close to the actress say she recently received a liver transplant.

March 3, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

The death of actress Michelle Trachtenberg just months after she allegedly received a liver transplant has fans wondering why the 39-year-old needed a transplant, Everyday Health reports.

Trachtenberg was found unconscious and unresponsive in a Manhattan apartment last week, according to The New York Times. Emergency medical workers pronounced the Gossip Girl and Buffy the Vampire Slayeractress dead at the scene. No foul play was been suspected, and Trachtenberg's family denied an autopsy.

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A post shared by Gossip Girl (@gossipgirl)

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A source told NBC News that Trachtenberg had received a liver transplant for an unknown condition months before her death.

There are several reasons a person may need a liver transplant. While liver disease can be caused by genetics, it is more often associated with alcohol use, obesity and viruses, such as hepatitis, according to Everyday Health.

In some cases, hepatitis causes liver cancer or severe damage to the liver, resulting in end-stage liver disease and ultimately liver failure. At this time, the only effective treatment for end-stage liver disease is a liver transplant.

About 103,200 U.S. men, women and children are on the national transplant waiting list, according to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA). In 2023, 10,659 people received liver transplants. What's more, people who require transplants are increasingly younger.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people, especially young people, consumed alcohol at higher rates, which led to an increase in alcohol-associated liver disease. While older men in their

60s were historically the main demographic for liver transplants, doctors now report patients in their 20s and 30s in need of transplants.

After a liver transplant, the recipient must receive immunotherapy to prevent the body from rejecting the new liver. The transplanted liver is foreign to the body, so the immune system may go on the offense. Transplant recipients are given drugs that suppress the immune system and prevent rejection of the new liver. Rejection commonly occurs a week or two following transplants; however, rejection can occur at any time.

“Initially, there may be technical problems like infections, blood clots, bleeding and medication side effects, which are usually manageable,” transplant hepatologist Leopoldo Arosemena, MD, told Everyday Health. “Subsequently, we’re watching for recurrence of the original disease, rejection, long-term diseases and malignancies.”

Survival after a liver transplant depends on several factors, including the recipient’s age and health as well as the donor’s age. Arosemena emphasizes that most people have a normal quality of life posttransplant if they follow the instructions of transplant centers.

In general, about 75% of people who undergo liver transplant live for at least five years, according to the Mayo Clinic.

To learn more, read Hep’s Health Basics on Liver Transplants or click #Liver Transplant. There, you’ll find headlines such as “Updated Model Reduces Liver Transplant Disparities for Women,” “Chicago Marathon Runner Finishes Race Cancer-Free and With New Liver” and “Study Encourages More Hepatitis C Positive Liver Donations for Transplants.”

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