Chicago Marathon Runner Finishes Race Cancer-Free and With New Liver

A man with liver cancer put off a liver transplant to run the 2023 Chicago Marathon. Now cancer-free, he just completed the 2024 race.

October 14, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

One year after delaying a liver transplant to run the 2023 Chicago Marathon, Batbayar Tserendorj has a new liver, is cancer-free and completed the 2024 race, according to Northwestern Medicine (NM).

Last year, Tserendorj then age 60, was living with liver cancer and on the waiting list for a new liver. He had been diagnosed with liver cancer in early 2023, likely caused by chronic hepatitis B and D infections, according to Northwestern Medicine.

The night before the 2023 Chicago Marathon, he received news from the transplant team at Northwestern Medicine that a liver match had been identified. An avid runner, Tserendorj had to decide whether to accept the new liver or delay the surgery and run the marathon.

After consulting with his medical team, he decided to postpone the liver transplant and complete the 26.2-mile race.

“This was my chance,” Tserendorj told Northwestern Medicine. “I knew I’d need a liver transplant in the long run, but my body was ready to race. I’d been training for months. Plus, I knew the liver could go to the next person on the waitlist, which made me feel good.”

After completing radiation to shrink his liver tumor, Tserendorj’s medical team assured him that running would help support cardiovascular function and help his body heal while he waited for a new liver.

“Typically, we’d be concerned if one of our patients turned down the opportunity for a transplant

because we want our patients to get better sooner, but this was different," transplant hepatologist Amanda Cheung, MD, told NM. "Batbayar's entire medical team could see his drive to run the marathon, so we were happy to support his decision and even happier to see him reach his goals."

Just 19 days after completing the marathon, Tserendorj went to Northwestern Memorial Hospital for his transplant.

This year, he crossed the 2024 Chicago Marathon finish line cancer-free with his new liver.

About 41,630 U.S. adults will be diagnosed with liver cancer this year, according to the American Cancer Society.

Hepatitis B and C are the most common causes of liver cancer, also known as hepatocellular carcinoma. In fact, liver cancer is most common in the United States among Asians and Pacific Islanders because the prevalence of hepatitis B is high in this group.

Indeed, Tserendorj was born in Mongolia, a country with one of the highest rates of liver cancer in the world. These high rates are typically linked to the elevated rates of chronic hepatitis B, C and D.

Treatment for hepatocellular carcinoma depends on how advanced the cancer is when detected. In addition to options such as chemotherapy, surgery and radiation, a liver transplant to remove the diseased organ and replace it with a donated liver can potentially cure liver cancer.

After completing this year's marathon with his family cheering him on, Tserendorj said he is feeling great.

"Life is not easy. Sickness and just all other things—you have to persist," Tserendorj told CBS News. "Liver transplant is not a death sentence. It's just a second chance of life."

To read more, click #Liver Cancer or #Liver Transplant. There, you'll find headlines such as "October Is National Liver Awareness Month," "Study Encourages More Hepatitis C Positive Liver Donations for Transplants" and "Black People With Liver Cancer Are Less Likely To Receive Liver Transplants."

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/chicago-marathon-runner-finishes-race-cancerfree-new-liver