**Payton's Liver Disease Progressing Faster than Expected**

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|  | [t1_payton_ap_01](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/football/nfl/news/1999/02/12/payton_health/lg_payton_ap_01.html)Walter Payton was quoted Friday in *USA Today* as saying he remains a "lean, mean, fightin' machine" but was having trouble sleeping. AP |

CHICAGO (AP) -- Walter Payton's liver disease is progressing faster than expected, and private planes have been offered to speed him to the Mayo Clinic when a transplant becomes available, a spokeswoman said Friday.

"The disease is progressing at a faster pace than anticipated," Susan Ward, a spokeswoman for Payton said. She said that if the urgency increases he may move up on the waiting list, "but he won't be moved up just because he's Walter Payton."

"He has to wait his turn just like everybody else," she said.

Several friends of the Chicago Bears great have offered their company planes so that he won't be bound by airline schedules and weather when doctors are ready to give him a new liver, Ward said.

She said that starting in three to four weeks the Hall of Fame running back will begin wearing a beeper to notify him immediately when a donated liver is ready and he must go to the clinic for the operation.

"This is the process that everyone goes through, and it doesn't necessarily mean Walter has been put above anybody," she said.

She did say that Payton visited the clinic immediately after the news conference at which he announced that he is suffering from a rare liver disease and would need a transplant. Doctors at that time measured the progress of the disease as being faster than what they had expected.

She said doctors were not specific about exactly how serious Payton's condition had become but that "they felt it was important for Walter to wear the beeper as quickly as possible."

The 44-year-old Payton was quoted Friday in USA Today as saying he remains a "lean, mean, fightin' machine" but was having trouble sleeping.

Ward said the star running back was not available for an interview.

"He's not feeling well at all today; he didn't sleep last night," she said.

Source: *CNN/SI - NFL Football - Payton's disease progressing faster than expected*. 8 July 2009 <<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/football/nfl/news/1999/02/12/payton_health/>>.