

Health Maintenance After Transplant

Health Screenings

Medications that you will take post-transplant put you at an increased risk for cancers. Because of this you will be expected to complete the following:

Skin Inspections and Skin Cancer

- Sun exposure:
 - Stay out of the sun between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3p.m. The sun rays are the strongest during these hours.
 - Wear a hat, long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
 - Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen lotion with minimum 30 SPF and combined UVA and UVB protection
 - Use lip balm every day that contains SPF
- Make an appointment with a dermatologist for an annual skin check, or right away if you notice any unusual skin growths, rashes, or discoloration.

Colorectal Cancer Screening

- All men and women beginning at age 45 should have testing for colorectal cancer. Repeat at least every 10 years, more frequent if recommended by a gastrointestinal specialist.

Mammograms

- All women starting at age 40, should have a yearly mammogram.

Pelvic Exam/ Pap Smear

- All women starting at age 21, should have a gynecologic examination, which should include a pelvic exam and Pap smear every 3 years and HPV testing every 5 years.

Prostate Exams

- All men starting at age 45 should have a yearly blood test for prostate specific antigen (PSA) to screen for prostate enlargement or cancer.

Dental Exams

- You are expected to see a dentist for an exam and cleaning twice a year. However, you must wait at least three months after transplant before your first dental visit.
- Upon provider discretion you may need to take an antibiotic called Amoxicillin, one hour before your dental procedure. This antibiotic will decrease the chance of bacteria entering the blood stream, which could damage your heart.
- If you have Penicillin®, allergy you can take Clindamycin 600mg one hour before procedure. Cyclosporin can cause gum swelling (Gingival hyperplasia). Please call the nurse coordinator and see your dentist if this occurs. Good dental hygiene will reduce the risk of gingival hyperplasia. Take appropriate antibiotics prior to any dental procedure.

Vaccinations

Since transplant medications can weaken your immune system, it is important for patients to stay up to date on their vaccines.

Tdap (Tetanus, Diptheria, and Acellular Pertussis)

- Everyone should be vaccinated every 10 years

COVID, RSV, and Shingles (Shringrix)

- We recommend you be vaccinated for COVID , RSV, and Shingles per CDC guidelines.

Influenza/Flu

- We recommend you get a flu vaccine every fall. If available and covered by your insurance, request the high-dose flu vaccine. You must get the injection and avoid the inhaled vaccine since the inhaled one has live virus and can give you the flu.

Pneumococcal (Pevnar 20)

- This helps prevent a type of pneumonia called pneumococcus. If vaccinated prior to 50 years old, you may require another dosage.

Hepatitis

- There are hepatitis vaccines against both type A (two-shot series) and type B (three-shot series). The hepatitis virus infects your liver and can lead to liver failure. We recommend you are vaccinated against both types of hepatitis virus. Unfortunately, there is not a vaccine against Hepatitis C.

You should never receive a “live vaccine” following transplant. Live vaccines can make you sick since they contain live virus. The chicken pox (varicella) vaccine or the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine are contraindicated following transplant.

Lifestyle Changes

We want you to live with your new heart for as long as possible. Therefore, we encourage you to take steps to improve your overall health and protect your heart.

Tobacco products

- Prior to being placed on the transplant waiting list, the transplant team talked to you about tobacco use and told you that you cannot use tobacco products after you received a new heart.
- Heart transplant recipients who smoke or use tobacco products are damaging the healthy new heart that was donated to them.
- People who smoke after transplant:
 - Are at increased risk for pneumonia and allograft vasculopathy (blockages of the coronary arteries) of their new heart.
 - Shorten their life expectancy.
 - Double their risk of developing cataracts.
 - Increase their risk of cancers in the lung, stomach, pancreas, bladder, throat, esophagus, larynx and mouth.

Marijuana Use

- We **strongly discourage** the use of marijuana (in any form) following transplant.
- Smoking marijuana after a transplant can expose you to a fungus called aspergillosis, which has up to a 90% fatality rate if contracted by transplant patients.
- Marijuana in any form can cause a dangerous drug interaction with your tacrolimus.
- Marijuana use is linked to higher risk of heart attack and strokes.

**PLEASE honor your pre-transplant commitment to care for your new heart and
DO NOT SMOKE!**

Alcohol

- Alcoholic beverages, such as wine, beer or mixed drinks, can interfere with your anti-rejection medications and may damage both kidneys and liver.
- We recommend you abstain from alcohol for the first year. Afterwards, you should have no more than one glass of wine, one beer, or one mixed drink per day.
- Drinking more alcohol than this may change the effectiveness of your transplant medications.
- If you frequently used alcohol (beer, wine, hard liquor) before transplant, please honor your pre-transplant commitment to not drink excessively again.

Diet

- Eat a well-balanced, low-fat diet with plenty of fiber, fruits, and vegetables.
- Diets high in fatty foods can increase your risk for cancers of the colon, rectum, and breast.
- Diets high in fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can reduce your cancer risk.
- Drink at least eight glasses of fluid per day to keep yourself hydrated.
- Being overweight makes you more prone to bone fractures, back pain, and heart disease. Studies show that the strongest anticancer strategy is avoiding obesity.



Exercise

- Exercise can decrease stress and fatigue and increase energy levels and your sense of well-being.
- Indoor or outdoor activities are limited only by the limits of your physical stamina.
- Use common sense in all activities.
- Restrictions apply only when there are extremes in pressure changes, such as flying in unpressurized cabins, skydiving, hang gliding and scuba diving. Your new heart's response to these activities is not normal and may make them hazardous.
- Swimming in clean pools, rivers, lakes, and the ocean is an excellent form of exercise after full recovery from your surgery.
- Relaxing in a clean hot tub for 10 minutes or less is acceptable after your incision has healed.