

Staying Healthy After a Kidney Transplant

Important self-care tips

This handout gives important self-care tips to follow after having a kidney transplant.

Why do I need these self-care tips?

After kidney transplant, you will take immunosuppressant medicines for the rest of your life. This puts you at higher risk for some health problems.



Taking immunosuppressant medicines puts you at higher risk for some health problems.

Protect Your Skin

Being on immunosuppressant medicines puts you at a higher risk for skin cancers.

Whenever you go outside:

- Use sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher. Reapply it every 2 hours.
- Use lip balm or chapstick with SPF.
- Wear protective clothing such as a hat and long sleeves.
- See a *dermatologist* (skin doctor) at least once a year.
 - If you do not have a dermatologist, ask your nephrologist for a referral. It is very important for you to see a skin doctor regularly.
 - If you see a patch of skin that looks unusual or causes you concern, see a dermatologist right away.

Avoid Unplanned Pregnancies

Having a baby after a kidney transplant can cause health risks for both you and your unborn child. Some transplant medicines can cause birth defects. These medicines need to be changed before pregnancy. If you:

- Want to get pregnant or are thinking about it, talk with your *nephrologist* (kidney doctor) before you try to get pregnant.
- Are sexually active, you **must** use 2 forms of birth control.

- Become pregnant OR think that you may be pregnant, **call your nephrologist right away.**

See ALL Your Doctors As Advised

- Be sure you have a primary care provider (PCP). Keep seeing your PCP for all routine care and screenings or exams that are advised for someone your age.
- Follow the advice of **all** of your specialty doctors about regular visits.
- Keep having cancer screenings such as a colonoscopy, pap smear, and mammogram. Taking immunosuppressant medicines puts you at higher risk for some cancers.

Vaccinations

There are 2 types of vaccinations: *dead* vaccines and *live* vaccines. After kidney transplant, you can have most dead vaccines. **But, do NOT have live vaccines.** To make sure you are safe, we advise you to ask the Transplant Program about any new vaccinations you want to have.

Keep getting:

- **Flu shot** every year. We advise you to wait until 3 months after your transplant before you get a flu shot.
- **Pneumonia vaccine** every 10 years.
- **Tetanus vaccine** every 10 years.

Traveling

If you plan to travel outside the United States or Canada, we advise you to wait until 1 year after your transplant. We also suggest that you go to a Travel Clinic before you travel. Travel Clinics will be able to tell you what safety precautions you need to take when traveling.

If you want an appointment with our UWMC Travel Clinic, please talk with your transplant coordinator.

Travel Medicines

When traveling:

- Always bring **more** medicines than the days that you will be gone.
- **Always** carry your medicines:
 - On your person
 - In the original pill bottles with the phone number of your doctors and your pharmacy
- **Never** put your medicines in your checked luggage.

Dentist Visits

- Keep seeing the dentist 2 times a year.
- Wait until 4 months after your transplant before you visit the dentist.
- You may or may not need antibiotics for dental cleanings.
- Before your first visit, tell your dentist you have had a transplant.
- Give your dentist a list of all your medicines.
- If you need urgent dental care within the first 4 months after transplant, call your transplant team. **You will need antibiotics before you see the dentist.**

If You Have Medicare

If you are under age 65 and you have Medicare for your primary insurance, be aware that it stops coverage 3 years after transplant. You must prepare for this.

You will need to find new insurance before your 3-year transplant anniversary, unless you are permanently disabled or over age 65 by that time.

Please talk with your Transplant Social Worker if you have more questions about Medicare benefits. UWMC Kidney Transplant social workers are:

- Jeff Harder: 206.598.4676
- Bethany Zornes: 206.597.3791

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Transplant Services:
206.598.3882