Home Care after Your Lung Transplant

Our goal is to help you be the best you can be, prevent infection and find early signs of rejection. Call your transplant coordinator during business hours if you have questions.

When you go home, it is important to have someone stay with you and help, 24 hours a day for the first 2 weeks. This is for your safety while you heal. If you need added help at home, work to arrange this before leaving the hospital. Tell your nurse about your needs.

Incision Care

1. Check your incisions every day for signs of infection. These include: redness spreading out, increasing pain, skin is swollen, see pus or drainage from the incision, or have general fever or chills. Call your doctor or transplant coordinator right away.

2. Every day, wash your incisions with an antibacterial soap. Pat the incisions dry with a clean towel.

3. Take a shower, not a bath. Stand in the shower so that the water hits your back and not your chest. Do not cover the incision in the shower. Take a warm, not hot, shower to avoid becoming lightheaded. Have someone near you the first few times for your safety.

4. Put on a new dressing after the incision is dry. Do not use powders or lotions on the incisions after washing.

Learn more about your health care.
Follow up Appointment

The first visit to your doctor will be within the first week you are discharged from the hospital. The date and time of this visit will be on your discharge instructions.

Daily Checks

- Weigh yourself each day before breakfast. Be sure you urinate first and wear the same amount of clothing. Use the same scale each day.

- **Take your temperature, blood pressure and pulse 2 times each day for the first 3 months**, or as directed. You may be told to take your blood pressure and pulse 4 times a day until your first post-transplant doctor visit.

- **Take your anti-rejection medicine and other medicines every day as ordered. Do not skip doses or double up when doses are missed.** If you are having trouble taking medicines, call your coordinator for help.

- **Use your incentive spirometer.** You will need to use your breathing exerciser when going home. Use it several times a day to practice deep breathing. Coughing and deep breathing are important to prevent infection in your lungs.

- **No lifting, pushing or pulling over 10 pounds until your 6-week check-up.** A gallon of milk weighs about 8 pounds.

Record Keeping

Keep a record of your **weight, temperature, blood pressure and pulse each day**. Keep paper copies to share with your transplant team at your follow up appointments.

Lab Testing – done every Monday and Thursday

Based on the anti-rejection medicines you take, review these drug levels:

- **Tacrolimus (Prograf)**
  - Hold your dose the morning of your blood draw. Then take this medicine after you have the blood taken for the test.
Staying Healthy

Prevent Infection:
- Wash your hands often with an alcohol based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Avoid crowds. Wear a mask when in groups of people, such as the waiting area of a restaurant, grocery store or when coming to the hospital.
- Avoid people with infections, such as colds or the flu.
- Use separate towels from others in your home. Change your towels every few days or as they get dirty.
- Do not handle animal waste or clean litter boxes or cages.
- Do not have fresh plants or do gardening work until you are told you may do so by your health care team.
- Getting tattoos or body piercings after transplant are highly discouraged due to the risk of infection.

Prevent Rejection:
- Take your anti-rejection medicines each day as ordered.
- Have your labs drawn as ordered.
- Keep your follow up appointments. Do not skip visits.
If you have diabetes or other health care problems, talk with your doctor and get help.

Daily Living

Dental Care:
- Anti-rejection medicines can cause infections in your mouth. **Brush your teeth two times a day** including your tongue and top of the mouth. **Floss your teeth daily** to help prevent gum disease.
- Tell your transplant coordinator about dental appointments. Tell your dentist that you have had a transplant when having dental work done. **Antibiotics should be taken before dental work to prevent infections.**
- **Contact your coordinator** if you have sores, gum overgrowth or white patches in your mouth.
Eye Care:
Prednisone, a steroid medicine, may cause some changes in vision. Cataracts can form. **See an eye doctor if you have any changes in your eyesight** such as blurring or seeing halos around lights. See an eye doctor each year for a routine checkup. **Report any vision changes or problems to your transplant coordinator.**

Hair Care:
Tacrolimus, an immunosuppressant medicine, may cause hair loss called alopecia (al-uh-pee-sha). Talk with your transplant team if you have this side effect.

Skin Care:
- Call your transplant coordinator if you find any unusual skin growths, rashes or discoloration.
- Prednisone or aspirin may make you prone to bruising. Be careful to avoid bumps and falls.

Sun Exposure:
Transplant patients have a high risk of skin and lip cancers. Since the risk increases over time, you must always protect your skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays with a sunscreen. Use skin protective factor (SPF) of 30 or greater. Use lip balm with SPF in it as well.
  - **Reapply sunscreen** every few hours and after swimming. Follow the directions on the label.
  - Avoid time in the sun between 10 am and 4 pm when the sun's rays are strongest.
  - Wear long sleeves, pants and a hat when you are outdoors to protect skin. Cover all skin not covered with sunscreen, such as face, neck or hands.
  - No tanning beds

Food Safety:
What may be safe to eat for the healthy person, can be a risk for a person on medicines that suppress the immune system. Use these general guidelines to prevent infection from foods you eat. For more information, read the handout, [Immunocompromised Diet Guidelines](#).
- **Dairy products** – Avoid drinking or eating food made with unpasteurized milk. Avoid soft cheeses like feta, brie, camembert or any cheese made with unpasteurized milk.

- **Eggs** – Eat eggs that are fully cooked. Avoid raw or undercooked eggs and foods that may contain raw or undercooked eggs such as cake batter, cookie dough, Caesar salad dressing, mayonnaise or hollandaise sauce.

- **Meat and poultry** – All meat and poultry should be cooked so the juices run clear. Avoid rare meats.

- **Seafood** – Avoid all raw or undercooked oysters, clams or mussels.

- **Fruits and vegetables** – Use a scrub brush to wash fruits and vegetables, even when you are not going to eat the peel or they are prepackaged. Avoid salad bars. Do not drink unpasteurized fruit or vegetable juices or cider.

- **Keep food prep areas clean and keep cooked and raw foods separate.** Clean cutting boards between cutting meats and vegetables. Be sure to clean counter surfaces well.

When **dining out**, order meat, seafood and poultry cooked medium or well. Do not eat pink animal meat. Make sure shellfish is well cooked and firm.

**Social and Emotional Health:**

You may have changes in emotion or mood from the new medicines and routines. Find positive ways to reduce stress and cope with your life changes. If you ever start to feel hopeless, have trouble sleeping, eating or problems thinking, talk with your doctor, social worker or transplant coordinator about resources. You may need changes in medicine, or there may be ways to cope with side effects of medicines.

Dealing with issues after a transplant can be hard at times. Let your transplant coordinator know if you need more support. Many transplant patients and their families find it helpful to talk with other transplant patients and families through support groups. Others find it helpful to seek some counseling with a social worker or counselor.

If you ever have thoughts of harming yourself or others, contact your transplant coordinator or go to the nearest emergency room for help.
**Exercise:**
It is necessary to engage in regular exercise to combat the side effects of your immune suppression medications. **Start a walking program.** You can do it anywhere. All you need are supportive shoes that fit well and do not rub.

If you have any of these problems when exercising, stop your exercise and call your transplant coordinator.

- Pain or pressure in your chest, neck or jaw
- Feeling tired even though you have been sleeping well
- Feeling more shortness of breath
- Dizziness or feeling light headed during or after exercise
- Feeling your heart beats are faster or more irregular during or after exercise

**Travel:**
Talk to your transplant team about travel. Some places of travel require vaccines for smallpox, measles, German measles or other diseases. Travel to some countries may not be safe since you cannot get some vaccines. Should you decide to travel without being vaccinated, the transplant team will need to send a letter to your local passport bureau stating that you cannot receive the needed vaccines.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.