Lung Transplant Rejection

To your immune system, a new lung is an organ that can harm you. Your body’s natural reaction is to send out white blood cells and antibodies to get rid of it. This is called rejection. Medicines, called anti-rejection or immunosuppressants, must be taken every day! These medicines work by lowering your natural immune system response for foreign objects, so the new lung can be accepted by the body.

There are two types of rejection: acute and chronic.

- **Acute rejection:** This is most common the first 6 to 12 months after transplant, but it can happen at any time. It often means that medicines need to be adjusted.

- **Chronic rejection:** This is rejection that happens over time with a transplant. The lungs may slowly lose function or breathing problems may start.

Protect your lung by knowing the signs of rejection.

If you have any of these signs, contact your transplant coordinator right away:

- A fever greater than 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Flu-like symptoms (fatigue, chills, nausea or ache)
- Cough
- Chest congestion
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in the chest
- Decrease in Pulmonary Function Tests (PFTs)

Learn more about your health care.
Blood work, bronchoscopy, pulmonary function, lung biopsy or other tests may be used to check your health.

These tests are also done on a routine basis, even if you are not having problems. Sometimes patients with rejection have no symptoms at first, so it is important to do routine checks to catch any “silent rejection” early.

**Treatment for Rejection**

*If at any time, you think you have signs of rejection, call us right away.*

Our team may start to treat rejection by changing your medicines or medicine doses may be increased.

If you have a biopsy, and it shows signs of rejection, you may be hospitalized for a more intensive therapy with anti-rejection medicines.

Unfortunately, rejection is a part of transplant. Even with the precautions to prevent it, rejection can and does occur. Take your medicines as prescribed, follow lifestyle changes and attend follow-up testing as scheduled to reduce your chances of rejection and limit its effects.

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