

# *WHAT MAKES A TRANSPLANT SUCCESSFUL?*

## *GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES*

### *DENTAL CARE*

It is important to take good care of your teeth and gums. We suggest that you floss and brush often using a soft bristle toothbrush and see your dentist every 6 months. When you have dental work done — even teeth cleaning — you will need to take an antibiotic.

### *PROTECTION FROM THE SUN*

Because people who have had transplants are more likely to get skin and lip cancers, you need to protect yourself from the sun.

1. Always wear sunscreen lotion and lip-gloss with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 20 to 25.
2. Wear sunglasses when outside during the day to protect your eyes.
3. Wear clothing that protects you such as hats and long-sleeved shirts.
4. Tell your doctors of any changes in your skin such as new raised areas, changes in warts or moles, sores that don't heal, or new colored areas.
5. Stay away from tanning salons, booths, beds, reflectors, and lamps.

### *CANCER SCREENING*

After your liver transplant, you may have a higher risk of cancer — mostly skin cancers — than the average person. Therefore, we suggest that you see your primary doctor to be screened for cancer. We suggest screening for skin cancers, cervical cancer with PAP smears, breast cancer with regular exam and mammograms, prostate cancer with blood work and physical examination. We know that many patients may need more screening than that, depending on their age, sex, and risk factors. These tests may include looking in the colon, chest x-rays or even CAT scans and bone scans. Talk with your doctor to see what you may need. Remember that preventing and finding cancer early are the two best weapons we have against cancer.

### *IMMUNIZATIONS AND SHOTS*

You should talk with your transplant team about immunizations and shots. You must never get any kind of live virus vaccines after the transplant including smallpox, yellow fever, measles, mumps, rubella, and oral polio vaccines. You should also stay away from children who have just gotten their shots. You can get shots that use "killed" viruses such as the flu shot, the TB test (Mantoux), the pneumonia, and *H. Influenza* B vaccines. A tetanus booster is good for 10 years. If you have a new liver transplant but you also have young children who need their shots, call the transplant office. All persons waiting for a transplant will get the hepatitis B vaccine unless:

- They already have hepatitis B
- They have already been vaccinated for this

After you leave the hospital, you will be asked to go to nutrition classes. The focus of the classes is to work on any nutrition problem you could have after transplant and to provide guidelines on how to have a healthy diet and life style.

## ***GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES (CONTINUED)***

### ***RETURNING TO WORK***

The best time for you to return to work will depend on what type of work you do. If you did not work before your transplant because of your disease, the goal is to get you back into a normal life again.

### ***SMOKING***

Smoking is strongly discouraged. It will damage your heart as well as your lungs and blood vessels. Smokers are at high risk for lung cancer, which can be deadly.

### ***PETS***

Animals can carry diseases that could be harmful if they are given to a person with a transplant. Check with your doctors about your house pets and caring for them.

### ***TRAVEL***

Contact the transplant team to see if it is safe for you to have certain medicines you might need if traveling abroad.

### ***SEXUAL ACTIVITY***

Once you are feeling well and strong enough, having sex is fine. Many men are impotent when their liver is in failure. Being weak and tired also adds to this problem. After a successful liver transplant, potency often comes back. Women whose periods stop during their liver disease will often see them return a few months after the transplant. Women may still be ovulating, even if their periods are not normal. Therefore, it is possible to get pregnant. Here are general guidelines:

- If you are of reproductive age and have a sex life, birth control must be used.
- IUDs can cause infection in a transplant patient.
- All women who have transplants must have a Pap smear and breast exam once a year. Women over the age of 50 will also need a yearly mammogram.

## ***GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES (CONTINUED)***

### ***CHILD BEARING***

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The decision to get pregnant and bear a child is very difficult. There are many things to think about. If you are a woman who has had a transplant, you should wait at least 2 years after the liver transplant. At this time, the doses of your antirejection medications should be low. There are many women who have normal children after a liver transplant. Many men who have had a transplant have become fathers to normal children.

Should you and your spouse want to have children of your own, you need to talk this over with your transplant doctors well ahead of time.

### ***ALCOHOL***

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Alcohol will harm the liver and can change the way prescribed medicines work. We ask that you do not take any alcohol or alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is broken down in the liver and can get in the way of tasks the liver must do to keep you alive and well. It is your responsibility, as a person who has had a transplant, to protect your new liver and stay away from any alcohol.