

Discharge Planning: Going Home!

Medication Management

You will need to take medications the rest of your life to prevent your body from rejecting your new heart and to treat other medical problems. Always take your medications as directed. By the time you leave the hospital, you should be taking all of your medications without help from the nurses.

Do's and Don'ts for Filling Prescriptions

Do's

- Do inform the transplant office of any new medications prescribed by other physicians before you begin taking them.
- Do keep track of how many refills you have on each medication. Bring a list of any needed refills to the transplant clinic.
- Do keep the name and phone number of your local pharmacy handy.
- Do keep the transplant office up-to-date on your allergies.
- Do store all your medications in their original containers in a cool, dry place — not the bathroom — and away from direct light and heat.

Don'ts

- Don't run out of medication before seeking refills.
- Don't wait until a weekend or after 4 pm to call for refills needed that day.
- Don't take any new over-the-counter medications or new medications prescribed by other physicians without checking with the transplant office.
- Don't depend on your pharmacist to notify you when you need prescription refills.

Medications to Avoid After Transplant

After your transplant, **you should not take** ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn), or celecoxib (Celebrex). These are medications that help with inflammatory pain. When combined with Prograf they are bad for your kidneys.

Planning Your Medication Routine

It is important that someone other than you is available to help with medication management. Even if you have managed your own medications prior to transplant these medications are extremely important.

Lab Work

Once discharged you will obtain weekly labs, typically on Monday.

- Do get your labs in the early morning 30-60 minutes prior to your scheduled morning dose
- When your transplant coordinator receives results of your bloodwork you will receive a call to let you know if you need to change your dose.
- **If you do not hear from us within 48 hours of getting your lab work done YOU NEED TO CONTACT THE OFFICE: (585) 273-3760**

Incision Care

Recovery after your heart transplant is similar to the recovery after any heart surgery. It takes about six to eight weeks for your incisions to heal.

At first, you may have some muscle or incision discomfort in your chest during activity. Itching, tightness, or numbness along your incision are also normal. Follow the guidelines below to ensure proper healing:

Keep your incisions clean and dry

- If your incisions are healing you may take a shower (no longer than 10 minutes).
- Use gentle soap and water to cleanse the site. Do not saturate.
- Do not rub your incisions with a washcloth until the scabs are gone and the skin is healed.
- Do not use any ointments, lotions or dressings on the incision.
- Do not lift anything over 10-20 pounds for six weeks after your surgery. Examples include suitcases, grocery bags, full laundry baskets, pets or children.

Daily Activities and Continuing to Recover

During the months of illness before heart transplant surgery, you and your family made many adjustments. The purpose of having heart transplant surgery was to make you feel better and to live a full life again.

Driving

You may not drive for at least six weeks. Your doctor will tell you when you can begin driving a car.

Pace yourself

- Spread your activities throughout the day. Schedule the most important ones early.
- You may climb stairs, but you may need to slow your pace or rest midway if you become tired.
- For the first two weeks after your heart transplantation, you may want to stick close to home to avoid infections or becoming overtired.

Get a good night's sleep

Many people complain of trouble sleeping for a time after any heart transplantation surgery. This can be due to the effects of anesthesia, discomfort related to healing, changes in your daily routine, or concerns you may have. Without enough rest, you may feel overtired and irritable.

Tips for a good night's sleep:

- If you have pain, take your pain medication about a half hour before bedtime. Arrange pillows to help keep you in a comfortable position.
- Avoid napping too much during the day. But keep in mind that during your recovery it is important to balance activity with rest.

Logging Your Vital Signs

Measurements of your body's functions, such as blood pressure, heart rate (pulse), temperature, and fluid status (weight), are vital signs. To help us monitor your progress and adjust your medications, we ask that you record your vital signs and weight each day.

Recording vital signs is an important way you can help the transplant team help you do well after your heart transplant. **Remember to bring a log of your vital signs with you to transplant clinic.**

Blood Pressure (BP)

- You will receive a blood pressure cuff that you can easily use to monitor your own blood pressure prior to discharge.
- Become familiar with your usual blood pressure and pulse rate. Blood pressure readings have two parts.



Systolic
Diastolic

- Always check your vital signs at rest. Sit and rest for at least five minutes before checking your vital signs.

Heart Rate (Pulse)

- Automatic blood pressure cuffs also display your heart rate or pulse.
- Your pulse is the number of heart beats per minute and will naturally increase with activity and exercise.
- Again, we are interested in knowing your heart rate at rest.
- Page the transplant coordinator on call for very low (less than 60) or very high (greater than 120) heart rate when at rest

Temperature

- Temperature Your temperature is generally lowest in the morning and highest in the evening.
- If you have recurring temperatures greater or equal to 100°F or a single temperature greater than 101°F, you should call the coordinator who is on call to discuss this and any other symptoms you may have.

Weight

- Please weigh yourself daily in the morning. If you gain one pound per day for three days or five pounds in a week, call the transplant office.