

# Living with a Kidney Transplant – Staying Healthy

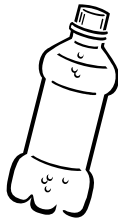
Looking after your overall health is essential to the health of your transplanted kidney. This sheet briefly outlines what you can do to keep you and your kidney healthy. It is especially important to look for signs of rejection or infection.

## Get regular health checks

Any small change in your health can impact the functioning of your kidney. See your health care provider regularly. If you get sick, contact your health care provider as soon as possible.

## Keep hydrated

As long as your kidney is working well, you need to drink a lot of liquids to keep your kidney working properly. Unless your health care provider tells you something different, drink at least 1 litre of water each day. Most people with a transplanted kidney drink between 1½ and 2 litres each day.



## Look after your teeth

Keep your teeth and gums healthy. This helps prevent any infections. See your dentist for regular checks. See a dental hygienist for regular teeth cleaning.



**Health care provider:**  
your family doctor or nurse practitioner

## Get immunized

While you might have been immunized as a child, as adults, people often forget to keep their immunizations up to date. You probably had your immunizations updated before your transplant. Once you have had your transplanted kidney for 6 months or more, you can return to your immunization schedule.

**Remember:** You must not have any 'live' vaccines. Always check with the person giving the immunization.

- Every year, get a flu shot.
- Get the pneumonia vaccine and then get a booster shot in 5 years. These two shots in 5 years give you lifetime protection.

## Clean your hands often

Clean hands help protect you from infection.

Clean your hands before:

- eating and drinking
- touching any cuts, wounds, or bandages



Clean your hands after:

- using the toilet
- blowing your nose
- touching any cuts, wounds, or bandages
- handling garbage

## Living with a Kidney Transplant – Staying Healthy - *continued*

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### **Protect your bones**

Even if you did not have any bone problems before your transplant, there is still a chance you can get bone problems after a kidney transplant.

To keep your bones as healthy as possible:

- Exercise regularly – it makes your bones and your muscles stronger.
- Plan a diet that fits your lifestyle and your health needs. A dietitian can help you with this.

### **Protect your lungs**

Any infection, including a chest infection can put your transplant kidney in danger. Contact your health care provider right away if you get a bad cold or flu.

Smoking or breathing in second hand smoke can increase the chances of you getting lung infections, lung disease, cancer, or heart disease. If you or those around you smoke, ask us for information on how to stop smoking. Nicotine Replacement Therapy is free.

### **Protect your heart**

The best way to protect your heart is to maintain a healthy body weight.

Get your cholesterol checked with your regular blood tests two times a year.

Keep your cholesterol within the normal range by eating a 'heart healthy' diet.

Take your blood pressure regularly and keep track of the results. The best way to do this is to get a home blood pressure machine. We can give you information on how to take your blood pressure.

### **Protect your liver**

You are taking many medications. Medications are broken down and absorbed by your liver. Alcohol also gets broken down by your liver. It is important to keep your liver as healthy as possible so it can properly process your medications. If you drink alcohol often or in large amounts, you can damage your liver. If you would like to enjoy a drink once in a while, talk to your health care provider about whether it is safe for you.

### **Get cancer checks**

Anti-rejection medications change how your body responds to your transplanted kidney. Unfortunately, these medications can make it more likely you could get other diseases, including cancer.

Cancer checks should be part of your regular checks with your health care provider. If you notice any lumps or skin changes, contact your health care provider.

### **Inform others**

You never know when you might get into an accident or get sick. Make sure you wear a Medical Alert bracelet or necklace that tells others you have a transplanted kidney. Always carry a Medical Alert card in your wallet as well.

### **It's good to ask questions**

If you have any questions, contact:

- The Kidney Transplant Clinic, 604-592-0922
- Your family doctor or kidney doctor