



Life after renal transplant: frequently asked questions

Information for patients from the Renal Transplant Services Team

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

Can I take this drug prescribed by my GP?

We advise you to check with the Renal Transplant Team, to make sure the medication is compatible with your transplant drugs. You can contact our renal pharmacist by email for advice, or the nurses in the Renal Transplant Office by phone (see contact details below). You can also refer to our “traffic light” information sheet for help with antibiotics.

- **Renal pharmacist** (medication queries)
Email (kentkidneymeds@nhs.net)
- **Renal Transplant Office**
Telephone: 01227 866443

Can I take over-the-counter medication such as hay fever, cold relief, paracetamol, or homeopathy / herbal medicines?

Some products are unsuitable or incompatible with your transplant medication, or may have other adverse effects such as increasing your blood pressure. Talk to the pharmacist in your local chemist first, then if necessary, contact our renal pharmacist, the transplant nurses, or email the renal pharmacist as above.

My supply of immunosuppression medication is running low, what should I do?

Contact Sciensus (telephone 0800 917 9665) two weeks before you run out. If this is unsuccessful, contact the Renal Transplant Office on 01227 866443.

I have been in contact with chickenpox / shingles, what should I do?

We would advise, where possible, that you avoid contact with people who have contagious illnesses such as chickenpox or shingles. However if you do have contact, we advise you to contact the transplant nurses who will hopefully have information that will tell us if you have some immunity to chickenpox. If we do not have any previous records, we will invite you to come in for a blood test to see if you are at risk.

Should I have flu and pneumonia vaccinations?

Yes. As your immune system is suppressed, if you do have the flu you could be more seriously ill and it will take you longer to recover. Transplant patients are also at a higher risk of contracting a form of pneumonia, so we advise you to have these two vaccinations. The flu vaccination should be given each year, but you only need to have the pneumonia vaccination every five years. This will be given by your GP. If you have not had a reminder by November each year, please call your GP surgery.

Other vaccines that may be safely given to immunosuppressed patients:

- Inactivated polio vaccine
- Pertussis vaccine
- Adsorbed tetanus vaccine
- Adsorbed diphtheria vaccine
- Haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine
- Hepatitis A vaccine and Hepatitis B vaccine
- Cholera vaccine
- Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine
- Meningococcal C conjugate vaccine
- Typhoid vaccine.

Vaccines that must not be given to immunosuppressed patients include any live vaccines:

- Oral polio vaccine
- MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella)
- MR vaccine
- Mumps vaccine
- Rubella vaccine
- BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) vaccine
- Yellow fever vaccine
- Smallpox vaccine
- Oral typhoid vaccine
- Varicella zoster vaccine (this is different to varicella zoster immunoglobulin that can be given).

Is it ok for me to have holiday vaccinations? Can I have anti-malaria medication?

Medication to prevent malaria varies depending on which area you are travelling to. You can find information on the following web sites - NHS Fit for Travel (<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk>) and National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) (<https://nathnac.net/>)

Once you know the malaria region and its advised medication, you must discuss this with us as dosage depends on your kidney function. See list above for 'live' vaccines that should not be given.

What are the results of my blood tests or other investigations?

If you have access to a computer, we can arrange for you to see your blood results online, this is called 'patients know best'. Please ask one of the transplant nurses for information and registration. If you do not have access to a computer, the nurses will be happy to discuss your blood results over the phone if you are concerned.

Other test results are usually discussed during your next consultant clinic appointment.

I feel unwell, what should I do?

If your symptoms are not kidney related, you should contact your GP for advice. If you feel your symptoms are related to your transplant or likely to affect your kidney function, please contact the transplant nurses. We are available from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. We have an answer phone which we check regularly throughout the day, if you wish to leave a message while we are busy in clinic. We will return your call as soon as possible.

If you are unwell or concerned over the weekend or during bank holidays, you should contact Marlowe Ward for advice on 01227 783100.

If you feel your condition is life threatening, do not hesitate in calling 999 for an ambulance and / or go to your nearest Emergency Department.

Can I come to the clinic later in the day or in the afternoon?

We usually do a blood test to check your drug levels and this has to be done before you take your immunosuppression medication. For this reason we would like you to come to clinic in the morning, so that we are able to process your blood tests and you can take your medication as soon as possible.

Can I have transport to the clinic?

You can contact Transport Services on 08000 960211, as you may be eligible for help with transport to the clinic for the first six weeks following your transplant, if you are unable to get to clinic by your own means.

What should I do if I am too unwell to come to clinic?

If you are feeling ill and already have an appointment for clinic that day (unless your illness is contagious), we advise you to still come to clinic and have your consultation. Your illness may have an adverse effect on your kidney function and we can check this during your visit.

If you are too ill to get out of bed, you should contact your GP and ask for a home visit. If you feel your condition is contagious, please call the Renal Transplant Office the morning of your appointment for advice.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145 (tel://+441227783145), or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

Reference number: Web 273

First published:
November 2014

Last reviewed:
July 2023

Next review date:
November 2026

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.