

## **Covid-19 Concerns for Patients in Need of Transplant**

### **Is it safe to get a transplant right now?**

There are some risks to receiving an organ transplant during the COVID-19 pandemic. After your transplant, you will be taking anti-rejection medicines that make it harder for your body to fight infection. This means if you get COVID-19 after transplant, you are at a higher risk for a more severe, maybe life-threatening illness.

### **Will COVID-19 affect my ability to receive a transplant?**

We still perform organ transplants. The pandemic does affect the number of hospital beds and equipment available which could affect transplants.

### **What is the UW Health Transplant Center doing to reduce the risks of having a transplant during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

- We require patients get the COVID-19 vaccine before adding them to the transplant waitlist and undergoing transplant surgery. This protects the patient and our other transplant patients.
- We have a vaccine policy in place for all staff at UW Health.
- We test all donors for COVID-19.
- We will test you for COVID-19 before your transplant.
- We have strict visitor guidelines to decrease the risk of spreading COVID-19 to our patients.

### **What steps can patients take to make their transplant safer during the pandemic?**

Get the COVID-19 vaccine! Getting the vaccine before transplant will help your body develop protection against COVID-19. This will also help protect other patients and staff in the hospital and clinic. Try your best to avoid getting exposed to COVID-19. Wear a mask when you go out in public and practice good handwashing.

### **What should my support person and household contacts do to keep me safe?**

Your risk of getting COVID-19 is much lower if the people you are in close contact with also get the COVID-19 vaccine. We *strongly* suggest that your support persons and all eligible members of your household get the COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone who will be in direct contact with you right after your transplant should be tested for COVID-19 24-72 hours before you go home. Direct contacts should also follow CDC guidance to avoid COVID-19 exposure. Anyone who tests positive should quarantine per CDC guidance. They should stay away from you until they have fully recovered.

### **Can I be active on the list after I get my vaccine?**

Most patients can be active on the list 2 weeks after they complete their vaccine series. Please let your transplant team know when you get any vaccines so they can discuss timing of transplant with you.

### **Does it matter which vaccine I get?**

The mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are preferred for transplant patients.

### **Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

You can get the vaccine in your local community. We also give free COVID-19 vaccinations in our transplant clinic at University Hospital.

### **Do I still need the vaccine if I have had COVID-19?**

Yes. The degree of protection against infection is unknown for those who have had COVID-19. We do know that getting the vaccine will increase your protection against the virus. We want to protect patients as much as we can against the virus, and the vaccine will help do that.

### **Does every patient need to get the vaccine before transplant?**

Exceptions will be made for those patients that are critically ill and do not have time to get the vaccine before their transplant. These patients are expected to get the vaccine after their transplant.

### **Do I need to get the COVID-19 booster shot?**

We strongly suggest that patients get the COVID-19 booster as soon as they are eligible.

### **Can I get a transplant if I have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Contact your transplant team if you test positive for COVID-19 to discuss when it is safe for you to have a transplant.

**What should I do if I am exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19?**

You should get tested 3-4 days after an exposure to COVID-19. Monitor for symptoms per CDC/Public Health guidance. Contact your transplant team. They will discuss the plan of care and when it is safe for you to have a transplant.

**How do I find out if I can have a visitor/support person come with me to University Hospital?**

We adjust our visitor policy and food restrictions based on the rates of COVID-19 in the community. For the most up-to-date information, always check [coronavirus.uwhealth.org](https://coronavirus.uwhealth.org) before all visits.

**What is the best way for a UW Health transplant patient to stay current with COVID-19 information?**

You can find transplant-specific information via the link [Covid-19 Information](#) found at [uwhealth.org/transplant](https://uwhealth.org/transplant). If you are not using MyChart, we suggest that you sign up at [uwhealth.org](https://uwhealth.org).