

Activity

You have just had major surgery. It is expected that your overall strength will be decreased at first. After you are discharged, you should be able to take care of your own activities of daily living (i.e., dressing, bathing, eating, and getting up to the bathroom) as well as walking every day.

It is very important to walk every day to help rebuild your energy, control weight, prevent constipation, prevent joint and muscle weakness (especially if you are on prednisone). Walking will also help with your overall sense of physical well-being. Plan for frequent rest periods and listen to your body's cues. If you are tired, take a nap.

Lifting, Sports and Driving

Avoid strenuous activity such as heavy lifting for at least 2 months after transplant. This means do not lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds (about 1 gallon of milk) for at least 6 to 8 weeks.

After 2 months, you may resume non-contact sports such as golfing, swimming and bowling. We recommend you check with the transplant office before you take part in any contact sports. Avoid jarring activities such as speed boating, snowmobiling or horseback riding for at least 3 months.

Do not drive if:

- You are experiencing blurred vision.
- You are still in pain and/or needing pain medicine.

Driving is usually allowed after 3 to 4 weeks. Use common sense.

Returning to Work

Patients with jobs requiring heavy lifting will not be able to return to work for 2 to 3 months. If you feel well, and the job does not require heavy lifting, you may return at 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. Please notify your transplant coordinator during business hours or during transplant clinic when you are being seen if you need a medical release for your employer.

Exercise

An exercise program will start while you are in the hospital and continue as an outpatient. The goal will be for you to exercise routinely 3 to 4 times per week for at least 30 minutes. The rule of thumb is to start slowly, be consistent and stop if you experience chest pain, shortness of breath, upset stomach, rapid heart rate or faintness.

Physical Benefits of Exercise

- Lowers your risk of heart disease
- Increases your sense of health and well-being
- Tones and strengthens muscles
- Helps to build bone mass and slows bone loss
- Improves sleep patterns
- Improves alertness, memory, retention
- Provides energy
- Controls weight

Activity, continued

Psychological Benefits of Exercise

- Increases feeling of well-being
- Decreases anxiety level
- Increases coping abilities for stress
- Improves self-esteem

Warm Up and Cool Down

It is important to always include a warm up and cool down when you exercise. These should include moving at least five to 10 minutes at a slow pace.

Sexual Activity

You may resume sexual activity 4 weeks after your transplant surgery. How quickly you return to your usual patterns will depend mostly on your recovery progress. Your sexual functioning may be affected by your transplantation and/or certain medicines. Some people avoid sexual activity because they are afraid of rejection or infection. If you have any of these fears, you may want to check with your local doctor.

Sexual Risk Factors

If you are sexually active and have more than one sexual partner, you must use condoms to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, syphilis, herpes, hepatitis or gonorrhea.

If you have received a high risk donor organ you and or your partner will need to use condoms during sexual intercourse until the testing phase is completed.

Pregnancy

You must use contraception to prevent unplanned pregnancy. We recommend using contraception to prevent pregnancy for at least 6 months to 1 year after transplant. **If you are planning to become pregnant after transplant, please consult your transplant team and a high-risk obstetrician before getting pregnant.** Don't be afraid to ask your doctor, nurse or transplant coordinator questions about this while you are hospitalized or during your clinic visits.