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KIDNEY TRANSPLANT SURGERY RECOVERY: RETURNING TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES

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Kidney Transplant Surgery Recovery: Returning To Normal Activities

When can I return to my regular activities?

You can resume your previous activities as soon as you feel better — and you might even feel good enough to add some new activities. A daily exercise program will continue to improve your health and help you maintain a positive attitude. You will not injure yourself or your new kidney if you follow some of these general guidelines:

- Avoid lifting heavy objects and strenuous physical work for at least 6 to 8 weeks following surgery. It is important that you do not lift anything heavier than 9 kilograms for 2 to 3 months, and nothing heavier than 18 kilograms for 4 to 6 months from the date of your surgery.
- Avoid driving for at least 6 weeks following surgery. Plan ahead so a friend or family member can help out during this time. When you are in a moving vehicle, always use your seat belt.
- Exercise is encouraged. We recommend beginning with stretching exercises and walking. Other excellent exercises include jogging, hiking, bicycling, tennis, golf, swimming, and aerobics. All of these can help you regain your strength and maybe started gradually after your incision has healed. (Please see “Exercise Guidelines” for more information.)
- As a general rule, rough contact sports should be avoided since they might cause injury to your transplanted kidney. If you have doubts about any activity, please ask the Transplant Team.

When can I go back to work?

Many kidney transplant patients are able to return to work within a few months following a successful surgery. However, various aspects of the recovery process can affect the timing of your return. You will need to discuss returning to your job with the Transplant Team. When the time approaches, a “return to work” letter will be provided. This will let your employer know when you may begin working and what limitations if any,

you have.

How soon can I take a vacation?

You may travel as soon as you are feeling better, but always let the Transplant Team know when you plan to go, and provide a phone number where you can be reached. By remembering these traveling tips, your vacation will be worry free:

- Always take all of your medicines with you and make sure you have enough medicines to last throughout your trip.
- If you are traveling by plane, carry your medicines with you. Never check them with your luggage.
- Make sure you have the Cleveland Clinic Transplant Center's phone number.
- Check to see if there is a medical lab or transplant center nearby where you can have your bloodwork completed. This lab will need to report your results to the transplant office.

How will the transplant affect my sexuality?

Although a kidney transplant can cause many life changes, it does not affect a woman's desire to become pregnant or hinder a man's ability to father a child.

Information for females

Although fertility is not a problem, rejection or high blood pressure are both complications a woman might experience for at least 1 year after transplant surgery. Therefore, it is important to prevent a pregnancy during this time by using birth control.

Women who have a kidney transplant can have a healthy pregnancy later. Talk to the Transplant Team about the timing of your pregnancy after your transplant. Also, know the risks and make sure your obstetric provider is experienced in dealing with transplant patients.

A female transplant patient who becomes a new mother should not breastfeed her baby. The immunosuppressive medicines prescribed after transplantation can be passed through the mother's breast milk and can cause harm to the baby.

Female transplant patients should be sure to have a yearly Pap test (a test for cancer of the cervix) and a mammogram.

Immunosuppressive medicines could cause increased susceptibility to various types of cancer. Pap tests and mammograms are preventive measures that can help your healthcare providers detect any problems.

Information for males

Male transplant patients might experience difficulty with erections after surgery. This might be caused by a reduction of blood flow to the penis, or it might be a result of the transplant medicines. In most cases, this problem can be treated. If erectile dysfunction is a problem for you, please talk about it with your doctor or the Transplant Team.

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