

Vaccinations Before and After Heart Transplant

Why do I need to get vaccinated before and after transplant?

Vaccination is a very important way to protect the body from infection. Here are a few reasons why it is important to make sure your vaccines are up-to-date **before** your transplant.

If there are any questions or concerns, call the heart transplant team at 312-695-4965.

1. **Patients with heart failure and heart transplant recipients are at high risk for getting severe influenza (the “flu”) and pneumonia.** Influenza and pneumonia vaccines are strongly advised to help prevent these infections before and after transplant.
2. **In rare cases, viruses such as hepatitis B can be passed on through blood transfusions or by transplanted organs.** Patients who are immune to hepatitis B virus (because they have been vaccinated) are protected from getting hepatitis B during the transplant process.
3. **After heart transplant, you will be taking anti-rejection medications that suppress your immune system.** This medicine prevents your immune system from rejecting your new heart. Since the immune system fights infection, taking anti-rejection medications also increase your risk for infections. They can also prevent your body from having good responses to vaccines. Therefore, it is important to be up-to-date on your vaccines **before** transplant surgery.

While you are waiting for your transplant, you should boost your immune system's ability to fight off infection by getting the vaccines that you need. Your heart team and infectious disease specialist will recommend the vaccines that are right for you.

What vaccinations should I have and when should I have them?

All patients waiting for a heart transplant should be up-to-date on their vaccinations before the heart transplant. These include:

- Diphtheria.
- Tetanus.
- Pertussis.
- Pneumonia.
- Hepatitis A and B.
- Annual flu vaccines.

If blood tests show that your immunity is low, we may advise you to get extra vaccine doses. The infectious disease specialist who works with your heart team may also suggest other vaccinations for you.

After your heart transplant and during your infectious disease office visits, your immunity against these illnesses may be checked by blood tests. If needed, your infectious disease specialist may order extra vaccine doses.

Are there vaccinations I should *not* get after my heart transplant?

Transplant patients should not receive live virus vaccines. The live virus vaccine may cause an infection in patients with weakened immune systems. Usually, the vaccines that **you should not receive** include:

- Smallpox.
- Measles/mumps/rubella.
- BCG.
- Oral polio.
- Oral typhoid.
- Yellow fever.
- Japanese B encephalitis.
- Nasal live attenuated influenza (the nasal spray flu vaccine).
- Chickenpox.
- Shingles vaccines.

It is important that **you do not receive** a live virus vaccine **within one month before** your transplant.

Are there any precautions I need to take when my family/household members receive vaccines?

We strongly advise that family members and close friends that will be around you stay current on their vaccinations. This will help protect you from exposure to infectious diseases. However, if a family member or other close contact receives a vaccine using a live virus (such as varicella or smallpox), you will need to take precautions. Please contact the heart team at **312-695-4965** to find out about any precautions you will need to follow if you will be in contact with someone who has received a live virus vaccine.

Do I need any special vaccines if I am planning to travel outside the United States?

Your risk for infection depends on where you plan to travel and for how long. A healthcare provider who has special training in travel medicine and immunizations can tell you what precautions and vaccinations you may need. If you plan to travel, please contact the heart team at **312-695-4965** for a referral to an infectious disease and/or travel medicine expert. Vaccines need several weeks to take effect before you leave for your trip. Allow enough time when you make an appointment.

Where can I find more information about vaccinations before and after transplant?

Your infectious disease specialist can give you more information about vaccinations during an office visit. You may also find more information about adult vaccinations at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/adult.html#print>.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center. This state-of-the-art health library is located on the 3rd floor of the Galter Pavilion. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Center by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nm.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312-926-3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312-926-3112, TDD/TTY 312-926-6363 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312-695-1100, TDD/TTY 312-695-3661.

Developed by: The Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute (BCVI) Heart Transplant Program and Department of Infectious Diseases

©February 2016 Northwestern Medicine

For additional information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.
900989 (2/16) Vaccinations Before and After Heart Transplant