



Cancer Care Ontario

What you need to know about your body and your follow up care:

For patients who have had a stem cell transplant

You have finished a very intense treatment for your cancer. You are now ready to start your stem cell transplant survivorship and long-term follow-up care.

Why do I need long-term follow-up care?

The therapy you needed to treat your cancer (including the stem cell transplant itself) has put you at a bigger chance of developing other health problems in the future. You needed these treatments to treat your cancer but they do come with risks.

Your follow-up care

Now that your cancer treatment is finished, you and your healthcare team will start to watch for other possible health problems.

You will go to a survivorship and long-term follow-up clinic for tests and a check-up:

- At 6 and 12 months after your transplant for your first appointment and once a year after that.
- You will need to have some tests (like blood work and an electrocardiogram (ECG)) done before these visits so your doctor has the information available for the visit.

Your healthcare team is always available to help you with any issues or health problems you might be having. They will do their best to help you stay healthy after your treatment ends. Some of the common health problems you may have after your transplant, and how they are managed, are described next.

Your immune system

Your immune system keeps you healthy by protecting your body from bacteria and infections. Your immune system gets stronger over your lifetime and from getting vaccines.

You lost your own immune system as part of your stem cell transplant. As a result, it is easier for you to get sick very quickly with a serious infection that could be dangerous.

Recommended follow-up care for your immune system:

- When your body is strong enough after your transplant your healthcare team will let you know that you can re-do your vaccinations. Getting your vaccine shots will help to protect you from life-threatening infections.
- You may also need to take medications to fight infections (antimicrobial medication).
- You may also need to get antibody (immunoglobulin) replacements if needed.



Your heart and blood vessels

You are at greater risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. By detecting these and treating them, we can help prevent the health problems they can cause (such as heart attack and stroke). Your heart may also have been weakened by your treatment which can lead to heart failure.

Recommended follow-up care for your heart and blood vessels

- Your healthcare team will regularly check you for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes and treat these problems early.
- Your healthcare team will order tests such as an electrocardiogram (ECG) or an echocardiogram (ECHO) test to see how well your heart is working.
- You may need also to see a heart doctor (cardiologist) if necessary.

Other cancers

After a stem cell transplant you are 2 to 5 times more likely to get another cancer than people who have not had a stem cell transplant.

Some of the more common other cancers people get after stem cell transplant are skin, thyroid, breast, gut and blood.

Recommended follow-up care to check for other cancers

- Your healthcare team will check for other cancers with physical exams and blood tests.
- When cancers are found early they can often be treated.
- Your family doctor will sign you up for cancer screening programs, like a mammogram or colonoscopy.

Other changes in your body

Stem cell transplant can affect your body in a number of ways.

Recommended follow-up care for the rest of your body:

- Your healthcare team will check your lungs, kidneys, liver, bones and hormonal system for signs and symptoms of health problems.
- You may need to get tests or other treatments to make sure that you stay healthy.

What can I do to stay healthy?



You are an important member of your healthcare team. It is important that you are involved in your care after your transplant and that you work with your healthcare team to stay as healthy as possible.

- Live a healthy lifestyle.
 - Wear sunscreen and stay covered when outside in the sun.
 - Keep a healthy weight.
 - Follow a healthy diet.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Avoid tobacco and **any** smoking.
 - Minimize drinking alcohol.
 - Go for all of your tests and appointments at your follow-up clinic.
- Get your vaccinations on time according to the schedule that your healthcare team gave you.

- Take your medications on the schedule that your healthcare team gave you.
- Visit your dentist for a check-up every 6 months.
 - Tell your dentist that you have had a stem cell transplant and that you are at higher risk for oral cancers and infections.
 - Take your protective antibiotics before dental procedures if recommended by your doctor (2 grams of amoxicillin or 500 milligrams of azithromycin an hour before your dentist appointment or other antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor or dentist).
- Go to all of your cancer screening appointments and for any follow-up.
- Share this information with your family doctor, dentist or primary care team, and let them know what your body needs now that you have had a stem cell transplant.
- See your family doctor right away for a check-up if you have:
 - Any lumps or changes in your mouth, skin, breasts or genitals (you should check these areas regularly).
 - Any changes in your bowel habits or unexpected weight loss.
 - Any other new symptoms that don't go away.



Your healthcare team is here to work with you and do everything they can to keep you as healthy as possible!

Notes:

Together you and your healthcare team can work to protect your future health.

For more information please refer to:

cancercareontario.ca/StemCellTransplantSurvivorship

bethematchclinical.org/post-transplant-care/post-transplant-guidelines