

Pre-Transplant Education

Skin Care



Why is skin care important in kidney transplant?

One of the jobs of your skin is to prevent bacteria from getting into the body. A break in the skin will increase your risk for infection. The medicines that you must take to protect your kidney puts you at increased risk for certain types of skin cancer and infections.

What is the risk of skin cancer after transplant?

The risk is anywhere between 2 to 100 times higher than people without a transplant, depending on the type of cancer, your age, skin colour and sun exposure.

What type of skin changes should I get checked out?

Look at your skin regularly for any changes.

Talk to your doctor if you have any moles or birthmarks that have changed. Changes to look for would be irregular borders, a colour change, many colours within the mole or birthmark, increase in size or the two halves don't match. These are the ABCDEs of looking at moles or birthmarks.

Have check ups with the skin doctor to look at your skin after transplant.



How can I protect my skin?

Between 10 AM and 4 PM limit sun exposure and seek shade when possible.

Wear a hat, long sleeves and pants to limit sun exposure.

Wear UV protective sunglasses (check for the sticker when you buy them).

Always use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more. Use the sunscreen as directed on the package or bottle and remember to reapply often. Most people don't use enough!

Can I have a tattoo or piercing after a transplant?

You should not have any new piercings or tattoos in the first year after your transplant because of the increased risk of infection. There is a higher risk of infection when piercing the cartilage (for example, the centre of the nose or the upper part of the earlobe.)

If you decide to get a tattoo or piercing, you should go to a professional (ask to see their licence), and make sure that their instruments are clean. Dirty needles can pass infections like hepatitis B and HIV from one person to another.

Check with your transplant team before getting any new piercings or tattoos to discuss whether it is safe for you.

Can I have a manicure or a pedicure after a transplant?

If you are treating yourself to a manicure or a pedicure, make sure you are going to a licensed salon or spa. Regular nail polish is okay to use, but avoid gel nails, as they can harbor infection. It is okay to have your cuticles pushed back, but don't get them cut.

