CHANGING YOUR

TRANSPLANT MEDICATIONS

- Maintaining Your Transplanted Kidney
- Changing Your Transplant Medication
- Your Daily Medication Schedule
- Resources to Help You Learn More

National
Kidney
Foundation®

EATING HEALTHY

Most people with a kidney transplant have few dietary restrictions, but it's important to maintain a healthy diet. In general, transplant recipients are advised to eat a heart-healthy diet (low fat, low salt) and drink plenty of fluids. If you have diabetes or other health problems, you may still have some dietary restrictions. A dietitian can help you plan meals that are right for you.

YOUR HEALTHCARE VISITS

It is important to maintain overall good health with your transplant. Having routine health screenings will help guide your care. You will also need regular blood tests to help determine how well your kidney is functioning, especially if your immunosuppressant prescription has recently been changed. This will also help find any possible problems early, when treatment is most effective.

YOU AND YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

Good healthcare is always a team effort—especially for transplant recipients. The people on your healthcare team help you most when you work with them as part of the team. You do that by sharing your concerns, asking questions, and by learning as much as you can about your transplant. Remember, you are the most important part of the team!

YOUR DAILY MEDICATION SCHEDULE

Living with daily medications often means developing new habits so you can remember to take the medications in a way that fits into your routine. Talk to your transplant team if you are having difficulty sticking to your medication schedule.

Barriers To Daily Medication

I forget to take my medication, especially if:

- I am busy doing other things
- I can't remember whether I've taken them already
- I fall asleep or oversleep
- Something interrupts my routine like a phone call or visit
- It is a holiday or celebration
- Nobody reminds me

It's hard for me to take my medications:

- On time
- Several times a day
- If there are too many pills to take at the same time
- When others can notice me taking them
- When it is inconvenient to do so
- Because they taste bad or are hard to swallow

I forget to bring them with me when I leave home

To Overcome Barriers

- Ask your transplant team about ways to simplify your medication routine.
- Post a medication calendar in sight showing the days/times to take them
- Use a pillbox, mobile phone, or watch with an alarm
- Place medications where they are visible (but out of reach of children or pets)
- Schedule your medications to coincide with regular daily routines
- Keep a small supply of medication in your purse or briefcase, at your desk at work, or other helpful places.

STEPS TO MAINTAIN YOUR TRANSPLANTED KIDNEY

- Schedule regular healthcare visits
- Take all your medications every day and at the same time as instructed
- Discuss any medication concerns or side effects with your transplant team
- Eat healthy
- Get regular exercise
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Ask how you can reduce your risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, or infection
- Empower yourself to become an active member of your healthcare team

CHANGING YOUR MEDICATION

By now, taking your immunosuppressant medications is a normal part of your daily routine. You already know how important it is to take them as instructed. You also know that without them, your body would see your transplanted kidney as a foreign invader and try to "attack" or destroy it. So why might you need to change your immunosuppressants?

- **Dosage.** In the beginning, when the risk of organ rejection is highest, most people need several types of immunosuppressants. But over time, your transplant team will want to lower your dose—if they have not done so already. The goal is to take enough medication to avoid rejection, but not so much that it causes side effects or other problems. Hopefully, you and your kidney will continue to do well on the lower dose. If not, your transplant team may change your medication.

- **Effectiveness.** Not all immunosuppressants work equally well for everyone. Your gender, past medical history, individual intolerance, and other factors can play a role. Your medication may be changed if your transplant team finds that it isn't working well enough for you.

- **Side effects.** Taking immunosuppressants can cause some side effects. Fortunately, these side effects are usually manageable. But if side effects happen, changing the dose or type of medications can often lessen them.

- **Health risks.** Some types of immunosuppressants can increase your risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and infections. For most people, the risk is small. Your transplant team may decide to change your medication because of health risks.

- **Financial costs.** Many immunosuppressants are available as generics. This can offer significant cost savings, but there is a downside. A generic may not provide you with the exact same drug exposure as the brand name. Why not? Because some immunosuppressants have a narrow window between being too much or too little with respect to drug exposure. Talk to your healthcare team if you have questions or concerns about the cost of your medications. You and your healthcare team can decide together whether you will benefit most from the brand name or the generic form of your immunosuppressant medication.

COMMON IMMUNOSUPPRESSANTS

Generic Name	Trade Name	Dosing
Tacrolimus	**Envarsus XR (New!)** **Astagraf XL**	• Once a day • Avoid grapefruit juice because it affects how the medication is broken down in the liver
	Prograf	• Twice a day • Avoid grapefruit juice because it affects how the medication is broken down by the liver
Cyclosporine	**Sandimmune** **Neoral**	• Twice a day • Avoid grapefruit juice because it affects how the medication is broken down by the liver
Prednisone	**Deltasone**	• Once a day • Best to take with food to avoid stomach upset
Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF)	**Cellcept** **Myfortic**	• Twice a day
Sirolimus	**Rapamun**	• Once a day • Avoid grapefruit juice because it affects how the medication is broken down by the liver
Everolimus	**Zortress**	• Twice a day • Avoid grapefruit juice because it affects how the medication is broken down by the liver
Belatacept	**Nulojix**	• Available as an IV infusion only • Dosing schedule depends on time after transplant but are usually given every four weeks
Azathioprine	**Imuran**	• Once a day

Note: Different tacrolimis, cyclosporine, and mycophenolate products are not interchangeable.

LEARN MORE

The more you learn about your transplant, the better choices you can make about your health. Ask your transplant team for more information. You can also visit the National Kidney Foundation's website at **www.kidney.org/transplantation** or call NKF Cares toll-free at 855.653.2273.

The National Kidney Foundation has many free educational resources:

THE NKF CARES PATIENT HELPLINE at 855.653.2273 is a toll-free number that you can call for information. A trained professional will listen to your concerns and help answer your questions. Ask for any of our free educational booklets on kidney transplantation or visit: **www.kidney.org/transplantation.**

CARE AFTER KIDNEY TRANSPLANT is a SmartPhone app that helps you learn how to stay healthy with a kidney transplant. It provides answers to frequently asked questions, and why it is important to follow all of the instructions and recommendations from your transplant team.

TRANSPLANT CHRONICLES is an e-newsletter from the National Kidney Foundation that provides information and resources for transplant recipients and families. Subscribe at **www.kidney.org/transplantation/transaction/chronicles**

THE TRANSACTION COUNCIL is a patient council for individuals and their families who are awaiting or have received a life-saving or life-enhancing organ transplant of any kind. The TransAction Council works to improve the livesof kidney recipients and their families. It is free and open to all. **www.kidney.org/transplantation/transaction/transactioncouncil**

Additional Resources:

TRANSPLANT CAFE allows individuals in the transplant community to connect online to create friendships, get and give support, increase awareness through advocacy, and much more. Visit **www.transplantcafe.com**

TRANSPLANT LIVING has information and resources that help you and your family make the best possible decisions about your post-transplant treatment. View their list of support groups to see if there is one in your area. "Transplant Living" is part of The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), which manages the waiting list for a transplant in the U.S. and matches donors to recipients. Visit **www.transplantliving.org**

> "Receiving a transplant has been a wonderful gift. There are physical issues to deal with, but life is much brighter now. You have to remember that your life before was no picnic."
>
> — A Transplant Recipient

National
Kidney
Foundation®

30 East 33rd Street
New York, NY 10016
800.622.9010
www.kidney.org

Sponsored by
Veloxis Pharmaceuticals