

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

After returning home, you should return to your normal activities. The key however is moderation. Initially, you will not have as much energy as you did before surgery. It takes time for your body to heal and to get used to the new medications. Be sure to nap and to space out activities. If you would like to go to a movie or social event and feel up to it, do it! If you would like friends to come visit you at home, that's OK too! Try to return to your normal routine as much as possible!

EXERCISE/PHYSICAL THERAPY

Exercise will be an important part of your life. It will help you return to your regular activities and enable you to maintain your overall health. Exercise has been shown to improve muscle tone as well as heart and lung function. It also helps to reduce stress and maintain ideal body weight.

Recommendations for Initial Home Exercise Program

Exercise is recommended twice daily. Choose from the suggestions below:

1. Walk 15 to 20 minutes daily, and gradually increase time as tolerated.
2. Continue the upper extremity, lower extremity, stretching, and posture exercises given to you at discharge.

Lifting Restrictions

Since you are not permitted to lift objects heavier than 15 pounds until 8 to 12 weeks following surgery, you need to avoid heavy resistance training in exercise. As time passes, you may gradually resume normal lifting. However, do not resume workouts with heavy weights or resistance equipment until you have been cleared to do so by your Transplant Team.

Outpatient physical therapy is available at the Rusk Institute and at other outpatient facilities. The Transplant Team makes arrangements for physical therapy if needed.

SCHOOL AND WORK

You should be able to return to work or school within three to four months. Your Transplant Team will help decide what is best for you. For career counseling, consult the transplant social worker.

SUN SENSITIVITY

You are more sensitive to the sun due to the immunosuppressant medications you are taking. This can pre-expose you to skin cancer or sunburn. You should always apply sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater) before going out, regardless of the season.

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DRIVING

You will not be able to drive for about three months after your transplant. If you are considering driving, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I well enough or strong enough to drive?
- Am I experiencing any side effects from the medications that would interfere with my driving, such as blurred vision or tremors?
- Am I experiencing any discomfort from my surgical incision?

Caution and restraint in this early post-operative period will help assure your personal safety and the safety of others on the road. Consult with your Transplant Team before driving.

SEX

You may resume normal sexual activity as soon as you feel you are ready. Over time your sexual desire will return to what you consider normal. If it does not return within three months consult with the Transplant Team. If you are not in a long-term, monogamous relationship, safe sex measures – including a condom – are mandatory. This CANNOT be emphasized enough! Your immune system is suppressed, and you are therefore at an increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

Although a woman's menstrual cycle may not be regular, it is still possible to become pregnant. Therefore, it is very important that you use birth control (i.e., condoms or a diaphragm). Birth control pills are not a recommended form of protection. If you are considering becoming pregnant, consult with your Transplant Team. Men who were previously infertile may now be fertile.