

# Discharge Instructions for Immunocompromised Patients



You have either had a procedure or been diagnosed with an illness that has made you “immunocompromised.” This means that your immune system is very weak, making it hard to fight off infection. The ability to fight off infection varies. It depends on your specific health problem and the treatment you have. Certain cancers, cancer treatments, HIV infection, and transplant surgery are some things that can make you immunocompromised. You must be very careful. Even the slightest infection can carry the risk for hospitalization or death. The following information will help you protect yourself from infection.

- Make an appointment to see your primary healthcare provider as soon as possible.
- Follow these instructions until your healthcare provider tells you that you can stop.
- Some of the instructions may not be needed. Ask your provider what's right for you.

## Medicine

- Take your medicines exactly as told.
- Don't take any other medicines, including over-the-counter ones, unless your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Tell your provider about any side effects you have.

## Skin care

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom. Make sure you wash them before and after changing any dressing or bandages.
- Stay out of direct sunlight. Use sunscreen that is labeled hypoallergenic. Make sure it has an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Use an electric razor for shaving so you don't cut yourself.
- Check your skin daily for irritation, cracks, or rashes.

## FOOD

- Follow the directions of your medical team about what is safe for you to eat or drink.
- Wash well any fruits or vegetables that you are going to eat raw. Peel them if you can.
- Cook all food to a safe temperature.
- Follow all food safety guidelines.
- Do not use any unpasteurized milk, dairy products, or juices.

## Keep your home clean

- Clean floors, carpets, furniture, and counter tops regularly. Use products that kill germs.
- Keep your kitchen clean. Cook and store all foods safely.

- Keep your bathroom clean.
- Don't keep plants or flowers indoors. If you garden, wear gloves. Also ask your healthcare provider if you should wear a mask.
- Wash your hands after handling trash.

## Prevent colds and the flu

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often. Try to keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, and face. Make sure you wash your hands before eating.
- Stay away from large crowds of people, such as at social gatherings and in public places.
- Limit visits with young children. They often have colds or the flu.
- Stay away from anyone who has a cold, the flu, or other contagious condition (such as measles, chickenpox, herpes, pinkeye, cough, or sore throat).
- Check with your provider about whether or not you should wear a mask when you are around people or out in public.
- Check with your provider about recommended vaccines.
- Stay away from people who are not up-to-date on their vaccines, including those for COVID and the flu.

## Other ways to lower your risk for infection

- Check with your provider before having close contact with others.
- Ask your provider before using cosmetics, contact lenses, tampons, or douches.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
- Don't share towels, eating utensils, or drinking cups with anyone.
- Don't use humidifiers or vaporizers.
- Stay away from animals.
  - If you do touch an animal, wash your hands afterward right away.
  - Don't come into contact with pet urine or feces.
  - Don't clean litter boxes, cages, or aquariums.
- Don't wade, sit, or swim in lakes, rivers, pools, or hot tubs. Try not to swallow water that is not safe for drinking.
- Check with your provider before cutting your nails. It may be advised that you file your nails instead. If you have trouble cutting or filing your own toenails, a podiatrist or foot healthcare provider can help. Don't get manicures or pedicures at a salon.
- To prevent injuring your feet or coming in contact with germs, always wear socks and shoes, even in your home.
- Drink safe filtered water either by using a home water filter, boiling your water (then cooling it) before drinking, or buying commercially bottled water.
- Always practice safer sex to prevent all sexually transmitted diseases.

- Take care when traveling. Talk with your healthcare provider for guidelines, especially when traveling abroad.

## Follow-up care

Make sure you see your primary healthcare provider as soon as possible. You will likely have an exam and more tests, if needed. You will also have a chance to ask questions.

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by our staff.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Blurred vision or eye problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Ongoing fatigue
- Rapid, irregular heartbeat
- Rash or hives
- New cough
- Sore throat, or white patches or sores in your mouth
- Pain or burning when urinating
- Skin cut or sore that swells, turns red, feels hot or painful, or begins to ooze
- Fever of 100.4° F ( 38°C) or higher, or chills
- Diarrhea that does not go away after 2 loose stools
- Pain or cramping in the belly

## Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath, wheezing, or tightness of the throat
- Trouble breathing or talking
- Feeling faint, dizzy, or lightheaded
- Skin or lips that turn blue, gray, or purple in color
- Feeling of doom

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