

# **Bone Marrow and Stem Cell Transplantation**

## **A Patient Guide**

**The Blood and Marrow Transplant  
Program**

**at**

**Northside Hospital**

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## Pre-Transplant Checklist

### What will I need to do before transplant?

There are many steps involved in the preparation of your transplant. The following checklist is provided to assist you in your preparations. Please keep in mind that each item might not be applicable to your situation and any questions or concerns should be directed to your Transplant Nurse Coordinator.

- Receive a copy of your schedule from your Transplant Nurse Coordinator
- Complete your Day 1 (Pre-Transplant Testing). On this day, you will receive a copy of your **Patient Education Notebook**.
- Attend any additional physician appointments which may be required for transplant approval. Your Transplant Nurse Coordinator will advise regarding any additional appointments.
- Prior to your Day 2 (Education Day), read the materials provided in your Patient Education Notebook. Make notes so your questions can be addressed when you return for your Day 2.
- Identify your caregiver(s). You will need to have a friend or family member act as your caregiver **during the entire transplant process**.
- Complete your Caregiver Agreement and Advance Directive paperwork contained in your Patient Education Notebook. Ensure that you bring the completed paperwork when you return for your Day 2 (Education Day).
- Discuss any dental needs with your transplant physician. Dental work should be completed prior to transplant.
- Make housing arrangements (if relocation is required). Your Nurse Transplant Coordinator can assist you with this process.
- Make arrangements for household maintenance and bill payments in the event you are in the hospital for an extended period or are required to relocate.
- Change the air filter on your home air conditioner or furnace.
- Make arrangements for child care.
- Make arrangements for the care of your pets.

## Pre-Transplant Checklist

- Finalize financial and insurance issues. Ensure you have an understanding of your outpatient prescription coverage.
- Attend your Day 2 (Education Day). **A caregiver must attend with you!** You must bring your Patient Education Notebook and completed paperwork (Caregiver Agreement, Advance Directive, etc.). Also, do not forget to bring any questions or notes that you may have.
- Notification from your Transplant Nurse Coordinator that you are approved to proceed with transplant.

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**SELF CARE GUIDELINES**

**MEDICATION INFORMATION**

- Before you get discharged from the hospital, the Clinical Pharmacy Specialist will review your discharge medicine sheets with you that include the following:
  - ◆ Medication information sheets (side effects)
  - ◆ Individual medication schedules (how and when to take your medicines)
  - ◆ Master medication schedule
- **ALWAYS** bring your discharge medication schedule and your medication bottles with you to your doctor appointments.
- Only take the medicines prescribed by your doctor. Avoid the following drugs unless you are told to take them by your doctor:
  - aspirin or aspirin-containing drugs (Bufferin, Alka-Seltzer, Goody's)
  - Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (such as Advil, Ibuprofen, Nuprin, Motrin, Aleve)These drugs can cause platelets to be less effective and may result in bleeding.
- There may be times when you are at home that you develop fever, pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or other problems. Before taking any medicines that have not been prescribed, contact your doctor; or the on-call doctor after office hours. Your doctor, Nurse Practitioner, or Physician Assistant may call in a prescription to your local pharmacy or recommend an over-the-counter medicine to treat your problem.
- If the medicines that you are taking are not working, call The Blood and Marrow Transplant Group of Georgia so that changes can be made. Please call as early as possible to allow enough time in case you need to come in, or if another prescription needs to be filled. If you ever have any questions concerning your medicines call The Blood and Marrow Transplant Group of Georgia.
- If you are not able to swallow or keep down your prescribed medicines for more than 24 hours, notify your doctor.
- Please be aware that any use of illicit drugs will prohibit you from proceeding forward with transplant.

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**GETTING YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED**

- Your insurance coverage will be verified prior to your admission for transplant for all outpatient medicines and home infusion therapies. You will be advised prior to admission as to whether you will be able to fill all of your outpatient medications through Northside Hospital's Home Care Pharmacy.
- If your prescriptions cannot be filled through Northside Hospital, call your local pharmacy to be sure they have the medicines and supplies you will need. Some items may need to be special ordered and advance notice may be required. The Clinical Pharmacy Specialists or Financial Coordinator will be able to help you with this process.
- It is important that you understand your prescription drug insurance benefits. Most insurance companies have co-payments that are the patient's responsibility. As a transplant patient, the list of required medications can be extensive thus co-payments may be significant and budgeting appropriately is imperative.
- If, for any reason you are unable to get your discharge medicines, notify your doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant immediately.
- Be mindful of your medications that might need to be refilled and notify a member of the BMT medical team **during** your clinic visit. **Pain medications cannot be called in to the pharmacy under any circumstances thus pain medication needs must be addressed at your clinic visit.**
- **Remember to address all medication refill needs prior to the weekend.**
- Northside Hospital Home Care Pharmacy Information
  - Location: Tower 8<sup>th</sup> floor Lobby 404-851-6310
  - Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30 AM to 5 PM
  - Saturday and Sunday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM (Use main hospital pharmacy)
  - Holidays Hours vary – call ahead
  - Payment: Cash, Check, Credit Card (American Express, MasterCard, and Visa only)

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**OFFICE VISITS**

The Blood and Marrow Transplant Group of Georgia office is at 5670 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd Suite 1000. Please sign-in at the reception desk on arrival. If you are feeling too sick to sit in the waiting room please notify the reception desk staff so your needs can be appropriately meet. Otherwise, the medical assistant will call you according to appointment time and direct you to the infusion area or the waiting area. Please note that children under 10 years old are **NOT** allowed in the outpatient waiting room, outpatient clinic and/or inpatient unit.

During the first months after transplant, a doctor will see you in the outpatient clinic daily. Please be sure to confirm your appointment each day with the front desk. The arrival times to clinic will vary depending on your clinical progress (as you require less support with intravenous (IV) fluids and/or blood products you may have arrival times in the afternoon).

During your clinic visit you will first meet with a Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant to discuss your health care concerns, examine you, and review laboratory tests. Please remember to bring your medication with you. Any necessary procedures, such as bone marrow biopsy or a lumbar puncture, will be scheduled at this time. After your visit with the Physician Assistant/Nurse Practitioner you will meet with the outpatient Clinic Physician to discuss your progress and treatment plan.

The following information can help make your office visit easier:

- Plan on spending **at least 4-6 hours** for each appointment, depending on the tests, procedures scheduled for the day and your need for IV fluids and/or blood products.
- **A caregiver is required (please refer to the caregiver agreement) to drive you to and from home each clinic visit and remain with you at clinic. You may be receiving treatment in our office that will impair your ability to drive safely. This is for your protection and the safety of others on the road. Remember to always, check with your physician before beginning to drive to make sure it is safe.**
- **It can be easy to forget questions you might have for the clinic staff. A helpful suggestion is to write down any questions you might have at home and bring your written questions to clinic.**
- Please feel free to bring food and/or drinks. We do have a microwave and refrigerator for patient use. Please put your name on the items you bring to the clinic.
- Wear comfortable clothes and bring an extra sweater in case of chills.
- Bring a book, magazine, DVD or other hobby such as needlework to help pass the time. There are a limited number of portable DVD players and laptop computers for

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

use. Headphones are provided in the clinic but please feel free to bring your own. We do have free WiFi available.

- Please bring your medication schedule which will be provided by a Clinical Pharmacy Specialist and all your medications in the original bottles to clinic daily.
- We recognize that the transplant process can be overwhelming and the transplant staff is working hard to ensure the safety of you and/or your loved ones. If you have any issue with any staff member, please let your transplant physician know and the matter will be addressed promptly. Inappropriate behavior toward our staff members will not be tolerated.

***In The Event of a Serious Emergency –  
Call 911 and follow their instructions!***

Please call 404-255-1930 for the on-call physician at BMT Georgia to assist in total management of your condition. If you do not receive a response after 20 minutes, call 404-851-6051. This is the phone number for the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, you will request to speak with a charge nurse who will then page the physician for you.

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**Inpatient Information**

On your transplant day, you will be admitted to the Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) Unit located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor at Northside Hospital. You will go directly to the BMT Unit and your caregiver will go to Northside Admissions located by the main hospital entrance. Ensure that your caregiver has your insurance and identification information to complete the admission process. Your caregiver will then proceed to the BMT Unit along with your admission paperwork to join you.

**When planning what items to bring on your transplant day please keep the following in mind:**

- It is acceptable to eat a light breakfast at home the morning of your transplant.
- Take your morning medications prior to arriving at the hospital.
- Arrive at the hospital at 7:30 AM.
- Bring only one change of clothing and limit luggage to one item. Your caregiver can pick up additional items if needed.
- Clothing should be loose fitting and top/shirts with buttons are preferred.
- Do not bring old blankets, pillows and or stuffed animals from home.
- Bring **clean** shoes and or **freshly washed or new (washed)** house slippers. Shoes which have been used to perform yard work are **not** acceptable.
- While it is encouraged to bring items such as a laptop, reading materials, and hobbies please limited such items on your transplant day. Remember your caregiver can return to pick up additional items if needed.
- Fresh flowers and plants are not allowed on the unit.
- Visitors will be limited to 2 at a time. Additional visitors **may** be permitted at the discretion of your healthcare team.

**Unit Routines**

There will be specific times on the BMT unit for vital signs, weights, assessments and labs. Keep in mind that the times listed are approximate and the assessments might not necessarily be completed at the below times.

- Vital sign times: 4 AM, 8 AM, Noon, 4 PM, 8 PM, Midnight.
- Weight times (vary according to physician orders): 4 AM & 4 PM or 4 AM. 2 PM & 8 PM.
- Labwork times: Midnight or Midnight & Noon.
- Note all urine and bodily waste is measured.

\*Please keep in mind that if during your treatment you have a hospitalization which is 30 days or greater you can be transitioned to another room on the BMT unit\*



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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**On your transplant day, your discharge from the hospital will depend on several factors:**

- You can swallow medication.
- You are eating food and can walk around.
- You do not have a fever.
- You are able to urinate.
- The physician feels comfortable with your support system once you are at home.

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## **SKIN CARE**

Your skin is drier and more sensitive after chemotherapy. Remember to use warm water rather than hot water, minimize the length of time of skin washing and do not scrub your skin. Careful skin care assists with skin healing and healthy skin is a protective barrier against infection

### Dry Skin

Moisturizing creams or lotions should be applied to damp skin soon after your bath or shower to increase absorption and moisture retention. Use lotions and soaps that are non-perfumed and are hypoallergenic.

Recommended products include:

- Lubriderm®
- Eucerin® plus lotion or cream
- Cetaphil® moisturizing cream
- Cereave® cream
- Aquaphor® ointment

If you have any questions regarding a product which is not included on the above list please ask a member of your healthcare team.

### Sun Exposure

Protect your skin from direct sun exposure. Avoid direct sunlight between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Wear a hat, sunglasses, and a long-sleeved shirt if you must be outside during this time. It is recommended that you wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher at all times when outdoors. Use a sunscreen that does not contain the product PABA as this may cause irritation. Ask your local pharmacist for suggestions about brands of sunscreen to buy. Do not use tanning beds.

### Insect Bites

Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors to avoid insect bites. It is important to wear insect repellent during high risk seasons.

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

Rashes or Skin Color Changes

Remember to check your skin daily and performing daily skin checks after showering is a good routine to establish. If you notice any new rashes or changes in the color of the skin, or red, yellow, or extensive bruising, swelling, blisters or tightness report these changes during your clinic visit. If you are not attending clinic on a daily basis call the Blood and Marrow Transplant Group of Georgia to report skin changes.

Nail Care

Artificial nails are not permitted at any time during your transplant treatment. Manicures and pedicures performed in a nail salon or spa are not permitted during your treatment as well.

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**RECOGNIZING INFECTIONS**

Although most patients remain healthy as they resume life at home, the risk of infection after leaving the hospital is a common concern. Remember to do not be overly anxious looking for signs and symptoms of illness but rather be attentive to changes in your body. Note that fever and chills are the most common signs of infection. If you have chills or feel hot or flushed, take your temperature. Please ensure you have a **good working** thermometer at home for your use. Note, if you are experiencing mucositis using an oral thermometer can be uncomfortable so having a tympanic thermometer available to you is appropriate.

Please plan to:

- Monitor your temperature as directed (see below for detailed instructions). Record your temperature on the temperature log sheets provided to you in your Patient Education Notebook. Ensure that you bring your temperature log to clinic daily as they will be reviewed with the BMT healthcare team.
- Once your catheter has been placed take your temperature every **4 hours (while you are awake)**. You will continue to monitor your temperature prior to transplant during your chemotherapy treatment and monitor your temperature post transplant as your counts are expected to decrease.

**Report these symptoms immediately to the outpatient BMT physician or nurse:**

- Temperature  $\geq$  100.5 F
- Shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing
- Hives or welts
- Problems with your Neostar catheter, such as:
  - Swelling, tenderness, drainage where the catheter exits or along the path of the catheter under the skin.
  - Inability to flush the catheter.
  - Leaking of fluid or blood.
  - Swelling of one arm.
  - Pulled or fallen out catheter.
- Confusion
- Bleeding
- Changes in vision
- Severe pain

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**Report these symptoms if they last for 24 hours:**

- Persistent cough
- Increased nausea/vomiting
- Inability to keep food or medications down
- Pain
- Headache not relieved by pain medication
- Skin changes: rash, sores, or itching
- Difficulty or burning when urinating
- Change in the color or consistency of your stools
- Redness, swelling, or tenderness in extremities

**PREVENTING INFECTIONS**

Most infections you may get are a result of normal organisms in your body that overgrow because your ability to control their growth is limited after chemotherapy. **Your best defense against the spread of infection is good handwashing.** Other ways to protect yourself from infections include the following:

- Wear a mask (masks are available at our front desk for you to use) when coming to the clinic or hospital. You do not need to wear a mask while at home around healthy family members or in the yard.
- Avoid large crowds until cleared by your physician. This includes movie theatres, grocery stores, restaurants, places of worship and outdoor functions, such as football games, fairs, etc. If you are unsure please ask your doctor, Nurse Practitioner, or Physician Assistant.

Once your blood counts have recovered and you are not neutropenic, your risk of infection decreases but remain higher than normal. You should still avoid exposure to people with infections. If others in your household become sick with a cold or the flu, inform your physician. Avoid close contact, and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. You should wear a mask and gloves if you need to be in close contact with the person who has infection.

- Avoid the Emergency Room at all times (unless directed by your physician).
- Contact with pets is safe, but do not clean up pet waste and avoid contact with litter boxes or pet feces. Do not sleep with, kiss or allow yourself to be licked by your pet. Avoid contact with barnyard and/or zoo animals as well.
- You should not work in the yard or garden or tend to household plants. Soil contains organisms that can cause infection and exposure to bacteria and other organisms which grow on plants or can be found in plant water is an infection risk. Household plants and flowers should be relocated to an area where you spend a limited amount of time.

**The Blood and Marrow Transplant Program at Northside Hospital  
Atlanta, GA 30342**

- While you still have a Hickman/Neostar catheter, do not go swimming in pools, oceans, lakes, or hot tubes.
- Do not get professional manicures and/ or pedicures to avoid bacterial and other infections. Artificial nails are to be avoided because of the increased risk of fungal infections.
- Do not go barefoot.
- Avoid operating heavy machinery and areas high in wood dust and other airborne particles.
- Your transplant physician must clear any and all travel outside the metro Atlanta area.
- If you live with children under the age of 10 years old please let your Transplant Nurse Coordinator and physician know.
- You should adhere to these guidelines for 3 months after an autologous transplant.
- Following an allogeneic transplant adhere to these guidelines for 3-6 months or until withdrawal of immunosuppressive therapy or as directed by your physician.
- Returning to work after transplant will be under the direction of your physician. In general, if you received an autologous transplant you may be able to return to work after 3 months. For allogeneic transplants 3-6 months or longer depending on your immunosuppressant therapy and GVHD treatment. There are additional restrictions for patients who are employed by schools, healthcare facilities, or work places that may pose an increased risk for acquiring viral or fungal infections. Final recommendations will be determined by the treating physician.
- Smoking is contraindicated while preparing and following a bone marrow transplant. If you currently smoke your healthcare team will work with you to have smoking cessation prior to moving forward with transplant. Smoking while having treatment can increase your risks for fungal infections, pneumonia, etc; which could lead to death?

## **EATING**

### **LOSS OF TASTE and APPETITE**

Chemotherapy may change the taste and digestion of food. Slowly increase the types and amount of food that you eat. Other patients have suggested cornbread with milk and cereals as good “starter” foods. In general, start with liquid and soft foods and advance to heavier foods as you feel you can tolerate them. Examples are:

#### **Liquid/Soft Foods**

- Soups
- Pudding
- Ice cream/milk shakes - homemade
- Liquid supplements (Ensure®, Isocal®, Enlive®, Boost®, Carnation Instant Breakfast®)
- Cottage cheese
- Breads/crackers
- Sandwich spreads
- Cooked vegetables
- Canned fruits
- Baked fish/chicken
- Cranberry Juice can help with the metallic taste

Concentrate on eating small amounts of high-calorie and high-protein foods several times a day. Try to eat the most when you have an appetite (usually mornings are best). Adding butter, whipping cream, cream cheese, salad dressings and pasteurized honey to foods, may increase caloric intake. Now is the time to splurge!

Protein is important for building and strengthening the body. Meats are high in protein but often the taste for or ability to tolerate meat is slow to return. Other foods high in protein include:

- Eggs
- Beans (dried)
- Cheeses (avoid cheese with molds - i.e blue, Stilton, Roquefort, gorgonzola, sharp cheddar, brie, feta, camembert, & farmer's cheese)
- Peanut butter
- Nuts
- Add 2 Tbs. skim milk powder to soups, cereals, casseroles, muffins, and pudding
- Make milkshakes made out of “Instant Breakfast”, whole milk and ice cream

Check with your doctor before drinking alcoholic beverages. Alcohol can interact with medications you are taking.

Detailed information regarding diet guidelines is provided in **Section 5** of your Patient Education Notebook.

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**NAUSEA and VOMITING**

You may have some nausea and vomiting after you are discharged from the hospital.

- Take anti-nausea medications as prescribed
- Eat small, frequent meals
- Drink eight to ten 8-oz glasses or 3 liters of fluid each day
- Avoid greasy or fried foods if you are nauseated. Start with liquid and soft foods and advance to heavier foods as you feel you can tolerate them.

Call your doctor if you are not able to keep down liquids or medications for more than 24 hours or if your nausea is worsening.

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**MOUTH CARE**

You may still be experiencing some mouth dryness or excessive mucous production when you leave the hospital. Most mouth problems improve or resolve within a few months of discharge. The most important thing you can do is practice good oral hygiene at home.

- Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and mild toothpaste after each meal and at bedtime.
- Floss your teeth daily if your platelet count is **50,000 per microliter or greater.**
- It is important to avoid alcohol based mouthwashes as they are irritating to the mouth.
- Recommended products include Biotene ® which is particularly helpful in the management of dry mouth as well as meeting daily hygiene needs.
- Club soda can also be an effective mouth rinse.
- It is advised that dental work be completed prior to starting the transplant process. Do **NOT** have **ANY** dental work done (including cleaning) unless you have first contacted your doctor at The Blood and Marrow Transplant Group of Georgia. Extra precautions may be needed to prevent infection or bleeding if you have dental work performed following transplant.

**DRY MOUTH**

- Drink as many fluids as you can.
- Eat foods with high fluid content such as popsicles or fresh properly cleaned and peeled fruits.
- Use a juicer to make fresh properly cleaned and peeled vegetable or fruit juices.
- Add gravy and sauces to foods.

## DIARRHEA

Diarrhea can occur after chemotherapy treatment. Also, if you are an allogeneic bone marrow transplant patient, diarrhea may occur as a symptom of graft-versus-host disease. Please report changes in the number color, and or consistency of your bowel movements to your physician. It may be necessary to obtain a stool sample from you to assist in determining the exact cause of the diarrhea. If not controlled, diarrhea can lead to problems in maintaining fluid and electrolyte balance. However, diarrhea may be controlled by the foods you eat and below are some helpful suggestions:

- **Eat** low-fiber foods                      Rice, noodles, white bread, smooth peanut butter, fruit-flavored drinks, eggs, bananas, cream of wheat, canned fruits.
- **Avoid** high-fiber foods                      Raw vegetables, fresh or dried fruits, fried foods, beans, whole grains, cooked broccoli, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, peppers.
- **Limit** caffeine in your diet                      Coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate
- **Limit** milk and milk products if they make your diarrhea worse.  
You may have lactose intolerance.

If diarrhea continues, call your doctor. You may need to take a medicine to decrease the diarrhea. Remember do not take any anti-diarrheal medication unless instructed to do so by your physician.

**ELECTROLYTE IMBALANCES**

Low potassium and magnesium levels are common due to medications, diet, and illness. Oral supplements will be prescribed if necessary. You can increase the potassium and magnesium in your diet by eating the following foods:

**High Potassium Foods**

- Dried Dates
- Raisins
- Nuts
- Cantaloupe
- Spinach
- Prunes, fresh or juice
- Bananas
- Tomatoes, juice
- Carrots
- Orange or grapefruit juice
- Bran flakes
- Fruit cocktail
- Salt Substitute

**High Magnesium Foods**

- Whole grain cereals and breads (especially bran and wheat germ)
- Nuts
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruits
- Cornmeal

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**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

As a part of your pre-transplant evaluation, your Nurse Transplant Coordinator will schedule an evaluation for you with a Physical and Occupational Therapist. It is the belief of The Blood and Marrow Transplant Program at Northside Hospital that physical activity is a vital part of your treatment. Your evaluation by the Physical and Occupational Therapist serves not only to establish your baseline activity level prior to transplant but provide you with a plan of care specific to your activity needs and abilities.

You can expect that you will be encouraged to get out, exercise, and keep physically and mentally active. Initially, walking is a good way to increase your strength and endurance. On the BMT unit at Northside Hospital, it is recommended that you walk 1 mile a day. You will also have access to an exercise bicycle in the BMT GA clinic. Remember remaining inactive and prolong bed rest will decrease your physical strength and stamina.

We are sensitive to the fact that fatigue is a common experience as you begin to increase your activity level. Don't push yourself too hard. Short, frequent periods of exercise are more beneficial than one long exercise period. If you get tired--REST. As your strength and endurance improve, you may walk up steps to increase the beneficial effects of exercise on your heart.

**Let your body be your guide!! Listen to your body!!**

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

**IMMUNIZATIONS**

Your immune system is still recovering. You should avoid being immunized with live virus vaccines (Sabin Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), mumps, rubella, BCG, yellow fever, FluMist®). In addition, as viruses may be shed from others who received live-virus immunizations, avoid contact with adults and children who have received these vaccines for 3 to 4 weeks after their inoculations. If your infant is scheduled to get a polio vaccine, ask the pediatrician to give the Salk parenteral vaccine.

You will receive an immunization schedule when you are discharged from BMT of GA back to the care of your referring physician. The immunization schedule will begin 6 months – one year after your transplant. These immunizations should be given at your referring physician's office.

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## **SEXUALITY**

Sexuality is an important part of life and involves intimacy and closeness as well as sexual intercourse. Showing affection and love to people important to you is not only safe but also encouraged. Sexual intercourse may be resumed as soon as you are ready and your platelet count is **50,000 per microliter and you have an absolute neutrophil (ANC) count greater than 1,000**. Also, please ensure that your partner is not ill, this includes but is not limited to having a cold, flu or cold sore.

Do not be discouraged if your sexual desire is decreased. This is normal after chemotherapy/radiation and will recover as you do. Although chemotherapy/radiation may affect your fertility, it is recommended that some form of birth control be used to prevent pregnancy during treatment. The following are recommendations:

### **MALES**

Male patients and male partners should wear condoms to prevent pregnancy and infections.

After chemotherapy/radiation therapy testosterone levels can remain lower. If within 4-6 months an interest in sexual activity has not returned Viagra or other drugs could be potential helpful. Talk with your physician to discuss the appropriate option for you.

### **FEMALES**

Oral contraceptives may be an option for women. Talk with your physician to discuss the appropriate option for you.

Vaginal dryness or loss of elasticity is common after transplant. The use of a water-soluble lubricant such as Astroglide® or K-Y Jelly® can assist with symptoms of vaginal dryness. These products may be purchased at your local drug store.

Avoid spermicidal creams, foams, or sponges, as they may be irritating to the genital tissues.

Avoid scented or drying vaginal products such as douches, sprays and or powders.

## **YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

Your main goal after transplant will be to maintain your health and regain your strength. Keep these tips in mind:

Do not try to resume all of your previous responsibilities immediately. **When friends and family offer to help, let them.** Identify tasks that would be most helpful and schedule helpers as needed. It is important to plan rest time each day, just as you plan time for activities such as walking or visiting.

**Keep stress factors to a minimum.** Pay attention to your emotions and let people know what you need in order to cope better with your illness. You may want to try going to a support group, practice relaxation techniques, or talk with a close friend, member of the clergy, or counselor. Remember that it is typical to feel a wide range of fluctuating emotions during this time.

**Communication with your doctor or health psychologist is key.** Monitor yourself for the following symptoms: an increase or decrease in your appetite, weight, sleep and activity level or feelings of depression, sadness, loneliness or increased levels of anxiety. Do not be afraid to ask for professional help, or to express your frustrations/emotions to your healthcare team.

Many people find that medication can be useful at this time

Children may behave differently when you go home and may act "distant". These changes often occur with changes in the family routine. Allow some time for routines to stabilize. Let teachers, friends, and your clergy know what is happening. Let them help you and your children.

**The Blood and Marrow Transplant Program at Northside Hospital  
Atlanta, GA 30342**

Friends and relatives may be unsure of what to say or do, especially if they have not seen you since your treatment began. They may want to know about your experience, yet be too uncomfortable to ask questions. Talk about your illness with your friends and family. Bring them up to date on your condition, feelings, and hopes for the future. Tell them how they can help you as you recover from your illness. Be patient with yourself and others. Resuming roles and relationships may take time.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact our Health Psychologist.

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Atlanta, GA 30342**

## TRANSPORTATION

A dependable car will be needed to get you back and forth for your clinic appointments. Your caregiver will serve as a driver for your clinic visits.

## LODGING

You must live within 1 hour (50 miles) drive of Northside Hospital. If you live more than 1 hour from the hospital, your Transplant Nurse Coordinator will assist you in making lodging arrangements. You may be eligible for lodging and travel benefits through your insurance policy. The Financial Coordinator will go over your benefits with you at your pre-transplant work-up.

If you have no lodging coverage, please see the lodging section in Section 12 of your Patient Education Notebook. A listing of short-term lodging alternatives available in the area, and/or information on the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge, a free lodge for patients and their caregivers undergoing cancer treatment. Please be advised that the Hope Lodge works on a first-come, first-serve basis and is free of charge. Your Nurse Transplant Coordinator will need to put you on a waiting list prior to the initiation of your treatment. You will need to be prepared to find alternative lodging should a Hope Lodge room not be available at the time you would need a room.

You will be required to be within the 1 hour drive by the time you start your treatment. This would mean at mobilization for autologous and high dose for allogeneic. The amount of time you will need to be local will vary. Typically, it will be 50 days for autologous and 100 days for allogeneic. Please note the above time frames are estimates and may be shorter or longer depending on your situation.

## CAREGIVER

You must have a caregiver available to you **24 hours a day 7 days a week** through the entire transplant process. Your caregiver must be able to drive you to and from clinic daily. Your caregiver must be able to follow your treatment plan and assist you with your medication schedule. It is recommended that you have multiple caregivers to assist you through the transplant process. If your caregiver has young children they must find another person to take care of the children while they serve as your caregiver. Caregivers will be required to sign a caregiver agreement, which can be found in Section 13 of your Patient Education Notebook.