

The Caregiver's Role

Utah Blood and Marrow Transplant Program

This factsheet explains the caregiver's roles after the transplant patient leaves the hospital. Caregivers take responsibility for many aspects of recovery and care.

Prepare the Home for the Patient

Before the patient comes home from the hospital, deep clean the entire home. You need to get rid of dust and reduce germs that can cause infections.

- Clean all carpets at least 10 days before the patient comes home.
- Use a cleaning product that kills germs on surfaces throughout the house. Give extra attention to these areas:
 - Handles and door knobs
 - Light switches
 - Faucets
 - Food preparation areas
 - Kitchen appliances, including inside the refrigerator
 - Phones
 - Remote controls
- Dust furniture with a damp cloth. Do NOT use feather dusters. They stir up dust.
- Put in new swamp cooler pads and air filters for furnaces and air conditioners.
- Vacuum the outside of heating vents.

Cleaning Schedule

Follow this cleaning schedule after the patient comes home.

Daily

- **Kitchen.** Clean counter surfaces, faucets, and sinks with a cleaning product that kills germs.
- **Bathroom.** Clean counters, faucets, and sinks with a cleaning product that kills germs.
- Clean all doors, cupboards, and drawer handles that the patient touches often with a cleaning product that kills germs.

Two Times Weekly

- Wash towels and washcloths.

Weekly

- With a damp cloth, clean areas that collect dust such as heater vents and the top of the refrigerator.
- Vacuum the entire house. Do NOT vacuum or dust while the patient is in the same room.
- Change bed sheets and pillowcases.

Monthly

- Change vacuum bags. If you use a bagless vacuum, empty the dirt container outside the house.
- Change furnace and air conditioner filters.

Transportation

- Provide transportation and attend all the patient's medical appointments.

Advocacy and Support

- Provide emotional support.
- Be an active participant in the patient's treatment plan.
- Clean and maintain the home.
- Prepare meals and help with activities of daily living.
- Be a communication link for the patient.

Physical Care

- Make sure the patient takes all medicines as prescribed. Watch for changes in the patient's condition and report to the BMT team.

Infection Prevention

- You and the patient should wash hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer cannot replace hand washing. Be sure to wash hands at these times:

Contact with others

- After touching another person
- After changing diapers or cleaning a child who has used the toilet

Continued on page 2

Eating and food preparation

- Before eating
- Before preparing food
- During food preparation after you touch raw meat or fish

Other

- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After using the restroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing – Before and after caring for someone who is sick – After handling garbage
- *Hint:* Singing the Alphabet Song while washing is an easy way to time 20 seconds.
- Make sure the patient wears a mask at these times:
 - On the way to, during, and coming back from appointments in the hospital or clinic
 - In crowds
 - Outside when it is windy or the air quality is poor
- Stay away from people who are sick or have signs of sickness.

Body Temperature

- Check the patient's temperature every day at the same time. Fever can be a sign of infection. If the patient's temperature seems to be going up, check it more often.
- Do not let anyone else use the patient's thermometer.
- After each use, wash the thermometer with warm (not hot) water and soap, or wipe it with rubbing alcohol.
- Ask the BMT team before you give any medicines to bring a temperature down.

Call the BMT Clinic if any of these happen:

- **Fever**
 - Temperature is $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ (100.4°F) or higher
 - Chills or shaking, even if the patient does not have a fever
- **General**
 - Blurry vision or other vision changes
 - Difficulty emptying bladder
 - Dizziness, feeling lightheaded
 - Extreme fatigue or weakness
 - Fast or irregular heartbeat
 - New persistent cough, sneezing, runny nose or shortness of breath
 - Falling
- **Gastrointestinal problems**
 - Nausea and vomiting not relieved by medicines provided the BMT team
 - New constipation or diarrhea
- **Skin problems**
 - Redness, swelling, drainage, or tenderness at catheter site
 - Any rash, redness, pimples, bruises, or blisters
- **Bleeding**
 - Blood in urine, stool, or sputum
 - Bleeding gums or nose
- **Pain**
 - Chest pain
 - Frequent or painful urination
 - Rectal burning or pain
- **Mental Changes**
 - Memory loss
 - Confusion
 - Slurred speech
 - Hard time finding words

Nurse Lines:

Monday-Friday 8a.m.-5p.m.

- Multiple Myeloma diagnosis: 801-587-4687
- All other diagnoses: 801-587-4686

After hours:

- Weekdays after 5 PM, weekends and holidays: 801-587-7000- ask for the BMT hospitalist.