



Skin Cancer After Organ Transplantation:

PREVENTION IS THE KEY

THE FACTS

Skin cancer is the most common cancer after organ transplantation.

- All solid organ transplant recipients are at increased risk for developing skin cancer.
- Up to 70% of fair-skinned transplant recipients will develop skin cancer within 20 years of transplant.
- Heart transplant recipients, followed by kidney recipients, are most likely to develop skin cancer.
- Skin cancer development occurs at much younger ages in transplant recipients, as much as 20-40 years before the general population.
- Squamous cell carcinoma is 65-times more likely in organ transplant recipients.
- Basal cell carcinoma is 10-times more likely in organ transplant recipients.
- Melanoma is 4-times more likely in organ transplant recipients.

Immunosuppressive medications and sun damage cause or permit skin cancer to develop.

- The longer recipients are on immunosuppressive medications and the higher the dose, the more likely skin cancer is to develop.
- Newer immunosuppressive medications may be less likely to promote skin cancer development.
- Ultraviolet radiation from the sun both damages skin cells and reduces the skin's immune system, leading to skin cancer.

Skin cancer can significantly decrease transplant recipients' quality of life.

- Although most transplant recipients will develop a small number of skin cancers, severely affected patients may develop numerous skin cancers, sometimes over 100 per year.
- Numerous surgeries for skin cancer can lead to deformities that affect both appearance and function.
- Recipients who need hundreds of cancers removed each year can experience a decreased quality of life and, in many cases, depression.

Skin cancer may cause death.

- Seven to nine percent of skin cancers in transplant recipients will spread to other parts of the body.
- Once skin cancer has spread, less than half of transplant recipients survive over two years.

Sun protection is the best strategy to prevent skin cancer.

- Daily application of sunscreen, before you leave your home in the morning, can eliminate 90% of sun damage.
- Wearing long-sleeve shirts and pants, a broad-brimmed hat and sun glasses are easy ways to avoid sun damage.

Early diagnosis of skin cancer can save lives.

- Almost all skin cancers start at an early, curable stage.
- Early recognition and treatment of skin cancer in transplant recipients can save lives.
- Self-skin examination and regular dermatologist examination offer the best chance of early detection of skin cancer.

Sun protection practices are currently inadequate.

- Only 54% of transplant recipients remember receiving skin cancer education.
- Only 40% of transplant recipients regularly use sunscreen.

For more information, visit www.AT-RISC.org.

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