The Coronavirus and the Liver Transplant Patient

March 4, 2020 By Karen Hoyt

Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen's I Help C blog.

How does the coronavirus affect a patient with a liver or other organ transplant? We all know the rules for living post-op, but this new strain has me feeling even more restricted. I'm not one for hype, and even traveled to Spain and won a gold medal in cycling in the World Transplant Games. I beat Hep C and had chemo, so I'm not going anywhere anytime soon. You can click links to open pages to my fact finders.

While some younger people have died in other countries, many of the death toll in the United States have been elderly. I'm not considered elderly, but certainly have put my immune system to sleep with Prograf and Cell Cept. Some of the information coming off the New England Journal of Medicine report "glass opacity" in lungs as the primary cause of death. Not a lot is out this early, but it seems to cause a heart attack from loss of blood in the lungs.

Transplant Recipients

After having cirrhosis and a failing liver for years, I got hepatocellular carcinoma, or liver cancer and ended up with a liver transplant. Those of us who take immune suppressants for life to keep from rejecting the liver have reduced immune systems for sure. That's why a liver or any other organ transplant patient will do anything to avoid being around people with any type of flu including the corona virus.

Transplant Patients to Avoid the Coronavirus

According to Healthline.com, it shows up in sputum, bodily fluids in coughing or sneezing, gastrointestinal tract and bowel movements, and in urine. Keep in mind that these tips are in general, the article is written early on, and that if you are in an area that is affected, you may need to be more careful.

Transplant Patient Tips

Wearing a mask in crowded places. Some suggest an N95 mask. So far, I wear a Hepa filter and will use it if I am in close quarters.

Use good hand washing techniques with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Also, don't touch the doors knob of a public restroom after washing your hands. My doctors office had the restroom doors propped open yesterday.

Give yourself some personal space. When in public, I always try to avoid standing close to strangers since the transplant. I've worn a mask in mass transit at times, and for sure will now. I also wear a scarf that can be wrapped around my face and head if I see a runny nose or hear people coughing.

Keep your hands off of your face. Touching any object that may have the virus and then rubbing your eyes can lead to possible transmission. Avoid eating or touching your mouth after being in a public area unless your hands are freshly washed.

Keep a hand sanitizer and clean sanitary wipes with you. I keep a small bottle in my purse and a larger one in my car. Spread that stuff around if you're going to be in an area where people are sick.

Honestly, if this things turns into a long-term virus that goes year-round like the CDC has stated, I'm gonna wear plastic gloves and keep all my skin covered till it's calmed down and no more cases.

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