



## **Frequently Asked Questions Pneumocystis Pneumonia (PCP) in Renal Transplant Patients**

### **1. What is Pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP)?**

Pneumocystis is a bug that causes a type of pneumonia. It causes pneumonia only in people with a weakened immune system. This includes transplant patients, patients with AIDS and those taking medications that lower the immune system.

### **2. Why is this problem happening now?**

Over the past year we have seen a higher than usual number of kidney transplant patients with PCP. We are still investigating why this might be. We have always known that transplant patients are at risk for PCP. That is why you were given Septra (or another antibiotic) for the first year after your transplant.

### **3. How big is my risk of PCP?**

The risk is small. Over the past year, only about 1% of kidney transplant patients have had PCP. However, PCP can be a serious illness that may require you to be admitted to hospital. Occasionally, some patients may need to be in the intensive care unit. That is why your transplant doctor recommends you restart Septra (or another antibiotic) to reduce your risk. Wearing a mask when you come to clinic or to the hospital may offer further protection.

### **4. Is it safe to come to the hospital or clinic?**

Yes. You should attend your regularly scheduled appointments. The antibiotic you are starting will protect you from getting PCP.

### **5. Is my family at risk? Can I give this to my family?**

Only people with weak immune systems get this type of pneumonia. This includes transplant patients because the medications you are on lower your immune system.

### **6. Can I go to work?**

Yes. Your life should otherwise continue as usual except for starting a new antibiotic.

### **7. Do I continue other antibiotics and medications I am currently taking?**

You should keep taking all of your other medications, as before. Your community pharmacist will review the other medications you are taking to make sure there is no interaction with this antibiotic. Please call the transplant clinic if your pharmacist raises any concerns about you starting this antibiotic.



**8. If I actually get PCP, what are the symptoms and what should I do?**

The first signs of PCP are difficulty breathing, fever, and a dry cough. If you get any of these symptoms, you should call the transplant clinic immediately.

**9. How effective is Septra at preventing PCP?**

Septra is very effective at preventing PCP. It is very unusual for a patient to get PCP while taking Septra. If you have an allergy to Septra, you will be prescribed another antibiotic called Dapsone.

**10. What are the side effects of Septra?**

Most people have no side effects when taking Septra. Septra causes sun-sensitivity. You should use sunscreen and avoid tanning beds. You should call the transplant clinic if you develop a fever, rash, nausea or diarrhea.

**11. What are the side effects of Dapsone?**

If you are allergic to Septra, you will be prescribed Dapsone. You will need a blood test before you start this medication. Most people have no side effects when taking Dapsone. You should avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice while on this medication. You should call the transplant clinic if you develop a fever, rash, nausea, abdominal pain or diarrhea.

**12. Will my insurance cover this?**

Your health insurance plan should cover the costs of the antibiotic. If you do not have a health insurance plan, or if for some reason your insurance does not cover the costs, please let the transplant clinic know and the hospital will provide the medications to you.

**13. How do I reach the transplant clinic?**

The team at The Ottawa Hospital is available to answer any questions you may have. You can reach a Transplant nurse at **(613) 761-5151**.