

Community Acquired Respiratory Viruses Information Sheet

Prevention of Community Respiratory Viral Infections amongst Transplant Recipients: Guidelines for Patients and Family Contacts

Infections due to community respiratory viruses (CRV e.g. RSV, adenovirus, influenza A and B, and parainfluenza types I, II, and III) are important causes of illness and can be life threatening in recipients of haemopoietic stem cell transplants (SCT). Allogeneic recipients are at much higher risk than autologous recipients and children are at special risk from RSV infection. CRV occur throughout the year but are more prevalent during the winter months. Also be aware that travelling overseas, depending on season and location, may also increase the risk of acquisition of CRV.

Measures Aimed at Reducing The Risk of Respiratory Infection
Immunisation with current killed influenza vaccine is recommended for all SCT candidates family and close contacts beginning during the influenza season prior to planned SCT. Immunisation of close/family contact is to continue for 24 months post SCT or for as long as the recipients immunocompromised state persists.

All SCT recipients will be screened for CRV in the week leading up to transplant. Transplant is likely to be deferred if the result is positive.
Patient visitors with symptoms of upper respiratory infection should be restricted from contact with SCT patients to minimise the risk of CRV transmission. Such symptoms may be indistinguishable from the common cold and include nasal blockage and discharge, sore throat, cough, fever, generalised aches and pains and ear infections especially in children. Other precautions in limiting spread of CRV include careful handwashing and preventing the spread of infectious secretions on tissues and objects.

What to do if a patient has symptoms of CRV

Consult the medical team for assessment. The problem may or may not be due to CRV. Many CRV infections are self-limiting. Many specific types can be identified and specific treatment may be needed for some. CRV isolation procedures are also important to prevent transmission of CRV to others, especially transplant patients.