

MAKE THE **GIFT** LAST

## Play it safe: Know your risks with over-the-counter medications

by Tom Montemayor  
Northwest Kidney Centers pharmacy manager



Everyone complains of aches and pains, upset stomach or cold symptoms from time to time. Transplant patients need to be extra careful when treating these symptoms. Many over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements

(drugstore items that you can get without a prescription) can present problems. They may be safe for other people, but they can put your health and your transplant in danger. Here are some safety tips for you to keep in mind:

**Always contact your transplant team for approval before you start any over-the-counter medication.** Even after you have received approval from your transplant team to take a certain medication, it is important to read the product labels closely. A lot of over-the-counter medications, particularly those for cough and cold, contain many ingredients. One ingredient may be safe, but another could harm your transplant.

**Herbal products can be especially dangerous.** Many people believe that, because herbal products are natural, they are safe to take. This is not true. Herbal products

are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. So, in most cases, they have not been adequately tested for effectiveness, purity, side effects or drug interactions. Some can even threaten the life of your transplant.

**Never treat a fever by yourself.** Contact your transplant team right away if you experience a fever. This can be a sign of serious infection or transplant rejection and should never be self-treated.

**If you can, treat common symptoms with lifestyle changes.** Many transplant medications have side effects, such as upset stomach, constipation or diarrhea. Talk with your transplant team about ways you can change your diet to minimize the number of over-the-counter medicines you use. A well-balanced diet with adequate fiber and water intake will work better than medications to achieve and maintain bowel regularity.

**Play it safe! Your health and your transplanted kidney are precious. Keep your transplant team informed, so they can help keep you and your transplant strong and healthy. ■**



## Risk of depression is high for kidney transplant patients

by Dr. Leanna Tyshler  
Northwest Kidney Centers transplant liaison



Transplant patients are at high risk for depression. A recent large study showed that more than 1 in 5 transplant patients suffer from depression.

Why is this so important? **Depression has been linked to**

**transplant failure and even death.**

Remember, depression is not just having a bad day. It is a medical condition that needs to be treated, just like diabetes or high blood pressure. It occurs because of a chemical imbalance in the brain that can be triggered by difficult events, stress or even medication side effects.

**As we enter the fall and winter seasons, it's a good idea to keep an even closer eye out for signs of depression.** Shorter days with less sunlight can increase your risk. And often the holidays (while also a joyful time) trigger feelings that lead to depression.

In the next column, you'll find a short quiz that can help you check for signs of depression. If you have felt five of the symptoms frequently in the past two weeks, talk to your doctor or social worker about how you're feeling and get help.

Don't ignore it. Depression is treated with counseling and/or medication, usually covered by insurance. Get the help you need, so you and your kidney stay healthy.

### DEPRESSION QUIZ

The medical definition of depression is having at least five of the following symptoms for two weeks or longer.

**For most of the last two weeks, have you...**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Felt down for most of the day, almost every day?      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Lacked pleasure in activities that you usually enjoy? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Either gained or lost weight without trying?          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Been sleeping too much or too little?                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Felt restless or agitated?                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Lacked energy or felt tired all the time?             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Felt worthless or weighed down by guilt?              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Had trouble concentrating on your tasks?              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N | Had frequent thoughts of suicide?                     |

SCORE  
(1 point for each YES answer)

**If your score is 5 or higher, protect your health by talking to your doctor or social worker.**



Follow us on Twitter and Facebook:



twitter.com/nwkidney  
facebook.com/northwestkidneycenters



## No added sugar? Take a closer look

by Lacey Stroomer  
Northwest Kidney Centers registered dietitian



**New dietary guidelines tell us to cut down on the added sugar in our food.** Limiting sugar is important for diabetes control, and it also helps reduce the risk for weight gain – all very good advice. Controlling sugar also helps to protect your transplant,

so it stays healthy for years to come.

**What does it mean when a food package claims “no added sugar”?** Take a container of yogurt, for example. It may say there's no added sugar, but it still lists 12 grams on the nutrition label. That's because many foods, like milk and fruit, have naturally occurring sugars in them. A container of plain yogurt has 12 grams of natural sugar from the milk. If it's fruit-flavored, you tack on 16 more grams from the fruit. That means a total of 28 grams of sugar for one serving of fruit-flavored yogurt!



**It's a good idea to check ingredients carefully for added sugar.** To make things trickier, sugar often appears under different names. Keep an eye out for these terms:

- Any ingredient ending in “ose” means sugar: dextrose, fructose, glucose, lactose, maltose, sucrose
- Corn syrup or high-fructose corn syrup
- Evaporated cane juice
- Fruit juice concentrates
- Honey
- Invert sugar, raw sugar or brown sugar
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Syrup

### Simple Chocolate Mousse

**Delicious without a lot of sugar: It takes just five minutes to create an easy, healthier version of a favorite dessert!**

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 package silken tofu (12-16 ounces)
- 1½ cups semi-sweet chocolate chips (add more or less for your desired chocolatey taste)
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla or maple extract

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Melt chocolate in double boiler or microwave, stirring often so it doesn't burn.
2. Blend tofu until smooth in a food processor or blender.
3. Add melted chocolate and vanilla or maple extract to tofu and continue to blend until fluffy and smooth.
4. Pour equal amounts into about 7 serving dishes and refrigerate for 2 hours until set.
5. Serve chilled with your desired toppings. (Try fruit, whipped topping, nuts or plain!)

Makes approximately 7 servings.

**Nutrition information (per serving):** 297 calories, 0 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrates, 6 g protein

## Did you know?

Northwest Kidney Centers' pharmacy, at 700 Broadway, specializes in the needs of dialysis and transplant patients. We offer many benefits, including:

- ➔ Caring service from experts in dialysis and transplant medications.
- ➔ Competitive pricing, and a 10 percent cash discount.
- ➔ One free prescription delivery per month.
- ➔ Full service for all prescription needs.

For more information on how our pharmacy can meet your needs, call 206-343-4870.

# transplant

## connection



NORTHWEST  
**KIDNEY CENTERS**

700 Broadway  
Seattle, WA 98122

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SEATTLE, WA  
PERMIT NO. 3768



## It's flu shot time! (Yep, for you too)

As a transplant patient, you are at increased risk for complications from the flu. There are plenty of myths about the flu vaccine. This year, get the facts and get vaccinated.

Some common myths about flu vaccine:

*Myth: "I got a shot last year, so I don't need one again this year."*

**The truth: Flu shots only protect you for about 6 months, so you need a shot every year. Also, the vaccine changes each year to protect against different types of flu virus.**

*Myth: "Getting the flu isn't that serious."*

**The truth: Each year 36,000 Americans die from flu, and 200,000 are hospitalized. As a transplant patient, you are at higher risk because your body is less able to fight infection.**

*Myth: "The flu shot can cause the flu."*

**The truth: It is impossible for the flu shot to cause the flu because it contains only killed virus. (The flu nasal spray vaccine has live, weakened virus and should not be given to transplant patients.)**

*Myth: "Only elderly people or those with health problems need the vaccine."*

**The truth: Vaccination is recommended for everyone older than 6 months.**

If everyone is vaccinated, the flu won't spread. Encourage your family and friends to get the vaccine. It will help us all have a safe and healthy season ahead. ■

