



FAQ - Situation surrounding the coronavirus

In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Transplant Québec wishes to provide answers to some frequently asked questions. Transplant Québec is closely monitoring the situation and taking all the measures required to fulfil its mission.

ORGAN DONATION

Are changes being observed in the organ donation process?

YES. All donors are now systematically tested for COVID-19 prior to organ recovery. Key actions are being taken to ensure the health and safety of patients waiting for a transplant, transplant recipients, donors and their families, and healthcare workers at Transplant Québec and in hospitals.

In these difficult times, we are asking for collaboration from donor families, which is more important than ever. The organ donation process may be prolonged, and strict limitations have been placed on bedside visits of patients in the intensive care unit, even at the time of death.

Are there any changes in regards to the eligibility of donors?

NO. Any person can be considered a potential donor, and all potential donors should be referred to Transplant Québec, in accordance with established procedures. Once referred, Transplant Québec and the medical team assess the potential donor's overall physical health, medical and social history, and general condition at the time of death in order to determine which organs to procure. All the necessary and standard safety protocols are observed.

Are organ donors tested for COVID-19?

YES. All donors are now systematically tested for COVID-19 prior to organ procurement. The safety of transplant patients remains paramount at all times.

Can organs be transplanted from a donor who tests positive for COVID-19?

NO. Currently, it is not possible to use organs from a person infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 or a person who has a strong likelihood of being infected, since it has not yet been scientifically proven beyond a doubt that the virus cannot be transmitted by transplanted organs.

Can I be a potential donor if I travelled recently?

YES. Even a person who has travelled in the past 14 days can be considered a potential donor, since all potential donors are systematically tested for COVID-19 prior to organ procurement.

Can a potential donor donate their organs if they have been in contact with someone infected with COVID-19?

YES. All potential organ donors are tested for COVID-19. The procedure is the same for each donor.

Has family care and support changed under the current circumstances?

YES. Under the current circumstances, there are strict limits on the time that a family can spend at the donor's bedside. Thus, approaching families about organ donation and providing them with support and follow-up must be done by telephone, while also ensuring that they receive continued comfort and reassurance.

LIVING DONATION

Transplant Québec is not responsible for living donation. In Quebec, this type of donation is coordinated by transplantation centres.

Is living donation possible under the current circumstances?

NO. The kidney and kidney-pancreas transplantation programs in Quebec jointly agreed to postpone kidney transplants from living donors and deceased donors until the situation is deemed safer for patients due to the existence of an alternative treatment (dialysis). The only two exceptions are kidney transplantation involving a recipient in a medical emergency and kidney transplantation in the context of a combined transplant, such as a heart-kidney, lung-kidney, or liver-kidney transplant.

Patients on the transplant waiting list, recipients who have questions concerning their condition, or any other questions are asked to contact the attending physician in the transplantation program through which they are receiving care.

Can living donation be carried out if the donor contracts COVID-19?

YES. Currently, donation can be carried out three months after clinical symptoms of the infection completely resolve.

TRANSPLANT QUÉBEC

How is Transplant Québec monitoring the situation?

Transplant Québec is closely monitoring the situation with public health authorities in Quebec and Canada, and it is adapting its approach as the situation evolves. All the usual safety protocols are being observed. Transplant Québec is in close contact with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec.

PEOPLE WAITING FOR A TRANSPLANT

Are there risks for people waiting to receive a transplant?

NO. Given that all potential donors are tested for COVID-19 prior to organ donation, there is no increased risk under the current circumstances. Transplant Québec and the transplantation teams carry out rigorous risk assessments with organ donors. All the usual safety protocols are observed. The health of people waiting for a transplant is a core concern for Transplant Québec and for transplantation programs.

Patients who are waiting for a transplant and who have questions concerning their condition (or any other questions) are asked to contact the attending physician in the transplantation program through which they are receiving care, as they usually do.

Is there a risk that wait times will be longer due to the current situation?

YES. While lifesaving organ donation activities are continuing in Quebec and organ donation and transplantation are considered essential services, under the current circumstances, all the transplantation programs have limited some of their transplantation activity. This reduction in activity may have an impact on wait times for certain patients.

TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS

Transplant recipients who have questions concerning their condition (or any other questions) are asked to contact the attending physician in the transplantation program through which they are receiving care.

Is there an increased risk of complications related to COVID-19 for transplant recipients?

YES. According to data currently available, transplant recipients are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the fact that their immune systems are suppressed. People over 70 are also at greater risk of developing complications related to COVID-19. The same is true for people with chronic diseases (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, etc.). It is therefore very important to follow the recommendations, specifically in regards to social and physical distancing.

What should I do if I am a transplant recipient or I am in close contact with a transplant recipient (e.g. a spouse) and I experience symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have symptoms that are consistent with those associated with COVID-19, please contact the transplant nurse at the hospital where you are being followed (or where the transplant recipient is being followed).

Is there a danger that the transplanted organ will be infected?

NO. Transplant Québec, in collaboration with care teams, is requiring careful screening for COVID-19.

OTHER QUESTIONS

What can I do to avoid becoming infected with the coronavirus that causes COVID-19?

- Using soap, wash your hands often in warm water for at least 20 seconds, scrubbing the entire surface of the hands on both sides.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you don't have access to water and soap.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow, and cover your mouth and nose with your arm to reduce the spread of germs.
- Use a disposable tissue and wash your hands immediately afterwards.
- Avoid handshakes and hugs.
- Practice the recommended social and physical distancing measures by keeping a distance of two metres from other people.
- If you are sick, avoid contact with the most vulnerable people, including seniors and people with a chronic disease. For example, do not visit people who are hospitalized, people in long-term care facilities or privately-run nursing homes. Instead, speak to them on the telephone or by using any other means of remote communication.

Where can I find more information?

- Self-care guide:
<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/self-care-guide-covid-19/>
- Government of Quebec:
<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>
- Government of Canada:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- World Health Organization:
<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- A **virtual assistant is available** on the Health Canada website to answer your questions in real time (click on the maple leaf at the bottom of your screen): <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>