December 31, 2020

Dear Current and Prospective Transplant Patients:

As we step into a new era with a COVID-19 vaccine available, we want to provide you with important information to answer some of your questions.

This letter is to give you guidance from your transplant team regarding the COVID-19 vaccination for both pre-transplant and post-transplant patients.

There are several vaccines under development in the US and two COVID-19 vaccines that are currently FDA (Federal Drug Administration) approved for emergency use distribution. We are not certain when these vaccines will be available to you as a patient. Each state has the responsibility of creating a vaccine plan. As we serve many patients in different states, at the bottom of this letter we have provided you with the website links to Utah’s and some of our surrounding state health departments. We expect that a majority of our patients will have the opportunity to receive a COVID-19 vaccine around March 2021. This date is a current estimate, and the timeline may change outside of our control. We recognize that you are part of the state’s high-risk designation group. However, we are not able to write a letter on your behalf to expedite administration of the COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, there is no current waitlist for you to be added to at this time.

Please see additional guidelines below developed with our Infectious Disease Physicians for patients who have already received an organ transplant, and for those who are still waiting.

**Guideline for Transplanted Patients:**

Vaccine outcome data is actively being gathered regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and transplant patients. We look at risk versus benefit for patients, which means we ask the question, “Is there more benefit than risk for each patient?” The University of Utah Infectious Disease Physicians, Transplant Physicians and Transplant Surgeons believe there is a greater risk to our patients who become infected with the COVID-19 virus than the risk of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in their immunosuppressed state. The American Society of Transplant also released a FAQ sheet on 12/8/2020 stating there is more benefit to the post-transplant patient receiving the COVID-19 vaccine than not receiving it. Based on this current data, we DO strongly recommend our post-transplant patients to receive the currently available mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech). The mRNA vaccine is not a live virus vaccine. Both of these vaccines require two doses. You must receive both doses. We do not recommend a post-transplant patient receive ANY live virus vaccines.

*When is it safe for you to receive the COVID-19 vaccine after your organ transplant?*

The transplant team has evaluated this question and has determined our patients should receive the COVID-19 vaccine no sooner than 30 to 90 days after their transplant. Your transplant team will work with you to determine what time frame is best for you. If you are further out than 90 days from your transplant, we recommend you get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you. You should inform your transplant team when you receive the vaccine. This is to ensure your team adds the vaccine information to your University of Utah record.
Guideline for Patients Waiting for their Transplant:

We look at risk versus benefit for patients, which means we ask the question, “Is there more benefit than risk for each patient?” The University of Utah Infectious Disease Physicians, Transplant Physicians and Transplant Surgeons believe there is a greater risk to our pre-transplant patients who become infected with the COVID-19 virus than the risk of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Given the high rate of COVID-19 spread, and based on current data, we DO strongly recommend pre-transplant patients to receive the currently available mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech). The mRNA vaccine is not a live virus vaccine. Both of these vaccines require two doses. You must receive both doses. You should discuss any other COVID-19 vaccine options with your transplant team before receiving them. You should be reassured that by receiving a currently available mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine you will not need to be de-activated from the transplant list and you will continue to get organ-transplant offers according to existing criteria. You may need to be re-vaccinated after you receive a transplant. This will be discussed with you by your Transplant Team.

What if I was already infected with COVID-19?
(Appplies to Post-Transplant and Pre-Transplant Patients)

The current guideline is for all persons to receive the COVID-19 vaccine even if they have had a previous confirmed COVID-19 infection.

We hope this information helps answer questions you have regarding the current COVID-19 vaccines. Below are additional resources for you. As always, your transplant team is here to support you.

American Society of Transplant COVID FAQ Sheet:

The following links to COVID-19 Vaccination Plans for some of the surrounding states. These websites also contain information for facilities wishing to administer the vaccine:
CO: https://covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine
ID: https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/
NV: https://www.immunizenevada.org/covid-19-vaccine-planning
NM: https://cv.nmhealth.org/covid-vaccine/
UT: https://immunize.utah.gov/covid-19-vaccine/
WY: https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/immunization/wyoming-covid-19-vaccine-information/