

## Caregivers and patients may have PTSD after transplant

Some caregivers and transplant recipients have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

That's according to survey answers from 1,000 people who either got a blood or marrow transplant (BMT) or cared for a loved one after transplant. Everyone who took the survey had a transplant at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Wa.

Transplant can have serious side effects and a long recovery. Recipients and caregivers reported distress due to uncertainty, family strain, medical demands, finances, sense of identity, and health problems.

Some caregivers and recipients reported more severe distress known as PTSD. PTSD may include:

- Nightmares or intrusive thoughts about transplant
- Avoiding thoughts or places that are reminders of the transplant
- Feeling constantly on guard or easily startled
- Feeling numb or detached from people, activities and your surroundings
- Feeling guilty or blaming yourself or others for problems related to the transplant

More caregivers than recipients reported symptoms of PTSD. Over time, fewer had symptoms:

- 5 years or less after transplant, about 9% (9 out of 100) caregivers and 6% (6 out of 100) recipients had symptoms
- More than 5 years after transplant, about 5% (5 out of 100) caregivers and 2% (2 out of 100) recipients had symptoms

PTSD can be treated. Transplant center staff should ask about PTSD symptoms. The BMT social worker should refer caregivers and patients to resources at the center or in the community.

### Keep in mind

Researchers only surveyed people from 1 medical center, so the results may be different at other transplant centers. Also, not everyone answered the survey. More research is needed.

### Ask your doctor

- Can you connect me with resources, such as a support group or counselor?

### Learn more about

- [This research](#)
- [Support for caregivers throughout transplant](#)
- [Free telephone counseling](#)
- [Tips for starting a conversation about anxiety, depression or PTSD](#)

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#### **Source**

Liang J, Lee SJ, Storer BE, et al. Rates and risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology among adult hematopoietic cell transplant recipients and their informal caregivers. *Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation*. 2018 Aug 9. pii: S1083-8791 (18) 30455-5. doi:10.1016/j.bbmt.2018.08.002. Epub 2018 Aug 8.

#### **About this research summary**

This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of the CIBMTR<sup>®</sup> (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research<sup>®</sup>). The CIBMTR is a research collaboration between the National Marrow Donor Program<sup>®</sup>/Be The Match<sup>®</sup> and the Medical College of Wisconsin.