

Planning Ahead

Adolescence can be a turbulent time in life as teens explore independence and plan for personal and career goals. This is no different in the population of adolescents who have had heart transplants. Teenage recipients may struggle with things like identity, relationships and plans for the future. These important issues can affect transplant outcomes.

Becoming an adult includes the fact that you will have different or changing health, professional and social concerns. As you mature, you will feel more comfortable discussing these concerns with health practitioners who focus on the health care issues and treatment of adults.

Part of our work in caring for children and youth with ongoing health concerns is helping them to prepare to move on to the adult health care system. We are happy to recognize that you have reached a significant milestone in your life and that that we have helped you gain the knowledge and skills to prepare for your long-term health and well-being.

Stollery Children's Hospital

Pediatric Heart Transplant
Program

4C2 Walter C. Mackenzie Centre
8440-112 Street
Edmonton, AB T6G 2B7



E-mail:

bernadette.dodd@albertahealthservices.ca

Health Link Alberta

Call toll free:
1-866-408-LINK (5465)
Edmonton: 780-408-LINK
Calgary: 403-943-LINK



Revised July - 2011



Time for Transition

Are You Ready?



Stollery Children's Hospital

Pediatric Heart Transplant
Program

What is Transition?

Transition is a process that occurs as a child or adolescent matures into early adulthood. During this time, the young person takes on increasing responsibilities for personal health care and decision-making; and maintaining good health.

The transfer of a teen's medical care to an adult health care provider is a single event in the transition process. The health education and skills needed to negotiate the adult health care system make up the majority of medical transition programming. Teens may receive guidance specific to their unique situation regarding health maintenance, career development, and relationships, among other subjects.

Adolescents living with chronic conditions such as transplantation are encouraged to become independent when it comes to maintenance of their own health. Transition represents the time in which this process happens.

The goal of the Pediatric Heart Transplant Team of the Stollery Children's Hospital for transition is to help teen heart recipients to develop the knowledge and skills they need to become young adults with the knowledge and skills to manage their own care.



When do we start?

Starting when you are 12 years old, until you are 17, we will discuss 'transition topics' during your regular clinic visits. From age 16 to 17 we will talk specifically about your transfer to the adult heart transplant program, making sure you have all the information you need to transfer easily to their care. The adult doctors will meet you for the first time in your usual clinic. As well, your pediatric doctor will come to your first adult clinic visit to help you adjust to the new routine.

How does transition happen?

As you get older, the doctors and nurses of the transplant team will be talking more to you about your health, your heart, how to look after your transplant, why it is necessary to take medicine, how to take medicine, and taking responsibility for your medicine.

As you mature other topics will be discussed including alcohol and drug use, sexuality, and what you want to be and do when you grow up. None of these conversations are meant to replace discussion on these same topics with your parents or school counselors -- we just need to talk about how having a heart transplant changes some of these things.

Who will be part of the teaching?

The transplant team helps to identify the topics that should be discussed with recipients. These topics may include things like managing your medications, nutrition, how to stay with the treatment plan and stay healthy.

The members of the pediatric heart transplant team bring together a wide range of knowledge and expertise to help focus on all of the special issues and concerns that you or your family may have for transition to adult services. This includes transplant cardiologists, nurses, researchers and other expert clinicians.

Parents can be present but we also like some time alone with teens so they can share some of their concerns with us privately.