

I can tell you what infection is and what the symptoms are.

Infections can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or fungus. The signs and symptoms of infection include:

- Fever greater than 101.4 F or 38 C
- Chills
- Irritability
- Tired or fatigued
- Loss of appetite
- Sick to the stomach or throwing up
- Loose stools
- Stomach pain
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- The transplant incision is swollen, tender, open, or draining
- Headache
- Painful urination

Infections are more likely when your child is taking medicine that keeps the body from rejecting the liver. Germs which do not bother people with normal immune systems can infect people taking these medicines. They take the opportunity when it is presented to them, so they are called opportunistic infections.

Here are some of the germs that are seen in children who have transplants.

Viruses

CMV or Cytomegalovirus

The risk of getting a CMV infection is highest in the first 3 months after transplant. CMV can affect the eyes, lungs, stomach, and esophagus,

Treatment for CMV

The child is treated with an IV medicine called ganciclovir (or Cytovene) or valcyte (Valganciclovir), a medicine given by mouth.

EBV or Epstein-Barr Virus

EBV can cause a disease known as PTLD or post transplant lymphoproliferative disease. Symptoms may start with feeling tired, weight loss, and fever. Another sign is swollen lymph nodes. EBV can also infect the intestines, causing belly pain, changes in bowels, or bloody stools.

To be sure it is PTLD, a child with the symptoms may also have a:

- CT scan to look at swollen lymph node or a mass.
- Biopsy of the swollen node or mass
- Endoscopy
- Bone marrow aspiration

Treatment for EBV

The child is sometimes admitted into the hospital, given an IV, and treated with a medicine called ganciclovir (or Cytovene). The child's doses of immunosuppressive medicines may be lowered. Hematology doctors may be consulted, and other medicines may be given. The child will need to see the Transplant Team often while being treated.

Herpes

Herpes viruses usually infect the skin as cold sores (herpes simplex) or shingles (herpes zoster). Herpes cannot be cured, but it can be treated.

Depending on the infection, treatment may be applied to the skin, by mouth, or by IV.

Fungal Infections happen less often, because we give the medicine fluconazole to prevent them after liver transplant.

PCP or Pneumocystis carinii Pneumonia

PCP is a yeast-like fungal infection. Since immunosuppressive medicines can put children at greater risk for PCP, they are given an antibiotic (usually Bactrim or Sulfamethoxazole/Trimethoprim) that helps to prevent it.

Candida

Candida is yeast that can cause infections. When it infects the mouth or throat it is called thrush. Thrush causes white, raw areas, tenderness or pain in the mouth or throat, a white film on the tongue, and trouble swallowing. Candida can also infect the tube that goes from the throat to the stomach (the esophagus). It is treated with medicine by mouth or IV.

If your child has any signs or symptoms of infection, call the Transplant Team right away.

Disclaimer

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