



Patient & Family Guide

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Polyoma Virus and BK Virus



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What is BK virus?

BK virus is a part of the polyoma virus family. About 80% of people carry the virus. People usually get this virus as children. It can stay inactive in your body without causing harm for many years. It can become active if you are immunocompromised (your immune system is weak).

Who is at risk of active infection from the virus?

People who have had a kidney transplant and are taking immunosuppressive medications (medications that suppress [lower] your immune system) are at risk of infection from the virus. This includes people who have had high immunosuppressive drug levels and whose transplants were slow to start working.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

What are the symptoms?

- When BK virus is inactive, it does not usually cause symptoms.
- In some people, the inactive virus can become active after taking immunosuppressive medications. If the virus becomes active, symptoms may include:
 - › Kidney damage
 - › Blood or abnormal cells in your urine (pee)

How is BK virus diagnosed?

You will have a blood test called a 'BK PCR' to check if the infection (BK virus) is active.

What is the treatment for BK virus?

- If your BK PCR blood test is positive, your doctor may lower your immunosuppressive medications as much as possible to try to prevent kidney damage, while still protecting your transplanted kidney from rejection.
- You will need to repeat the test once a month to check your BK PCR levels. Each test must be done at least 28 days apart.

