

My Choices: Kidney Transplant

One choice you may have is to receive a kidney from another person. The new kidney takes over cleaning the blood in your body. Transplant is another treatment choice; it is not a cure for kidney failure. You have the right to be referred to and evaluated for a transplant.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Kidney Transplant

Advantages

- Your overall health and quality of life improves
- You will feel healthier
- You will be less tired and have more energy
- You don't have a dialysis schedule
- You have more freedom
- You may be able to return to work

Disadvantages

- You have to take medications daily and throughout the life of the kidney
- You may have side effects from the medications
 - Weight gain and changes in your body image
- Medications cost a lot
- Your body may reject the transplanted kidney
- You may have complications as a result of a rejection

How and Where Do I Start?

- Talk with your kidney doctor to let them know that you are interested in a kidney transplant.
- If you are not a candidate, your doctor will tell you the reasons why.
- If you are a candidate, your doctor will make a referral to the transplant center of your choice.
 - Ask for information about the transplant centers in your area.
- The transplant center will...
 - Do an evaluation and testing to decide if transplant is right for you
 - Give you the reasons why, if you are not selected as a candidate
 - Discuss possible donor options, if you are a candidate

How Is It Done?

There are several steps taken to make sure the transplanted kidney you get is not rejected by your body.

- Donor blood and tissues are tested.
- If a match, surgery is planned.
- Surgery:
 - The donor kidney is surgically placed in the lower abdomen on either the right or left side near the hip bone.
 - The donated kidney is connected to an existing artery and a vein in the same area.

Generally, a patient's natural kidneys stay and are not removed unless persistent infection or uncontrolled blood pressure is present.

Kidney transplants can improve your quality of life and life expectancy. However, because it is a treatment and not a cure, you will need to strictly follow your doctor's orders. To keep your new kidney working you will have to take anti-rejection medications for the rest of your life.

Types of Kidney Donors

Deceased Donor (Cadaveric)

A deceased donor kidney comes from a person who has just died. The deceased donor and the family have given permission for the kidneys, and other organs, to be donated to someone waiting for a transplant.

Living Related Donor

A living related donor kidney comes from a blood relative, like a parent, brother, sister, or an adult child, and is the best option. The donor must be offering their kidney willingly, without pressure from anyone. In most cases, there is no waiting time after the evaluation for a living related donor.

Living Unrelated Donor

A living unrelated donor kidney comes from someone who is not related to the person, like a spouse or a friend. There is no waiting time after the evaluation for a living unrelated donor. The donor must be willing to give you the kidney without pressure from anyone.

Kidney Donor Exchange

Once a donor is approved for a living donor, if they are not a match with you, you and the donor can join a living donor exchange program. It makes it possible for you to receive a kidney.

My Questions

Ask Your Care Team:

- Is transplantation a good choice for me?
- How do I get added to transplant waiting list?
- Who can I talk to regarding finances or family concerns?
- Where are the kidney transplant centers in my area?
- Are all transplant centers the same?