Treatment Choice

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

- A kidney transplant may help you live longer.
- Many people have more energy and feel better after transplant.
- You do not need regular dialysis treatments.
- You may have more freedom to travel and spend time on activities you enjoy.
- You may have fewer diet and fluid restrictions.
- Many people are able to work, attend school, and be more active.

Disadvantages

- Transplant surgery has risks, including infection and other complications.
- You must take anti-rejection medicines every day, as long as the kidney is working.
- Medicines can cause side effects and increase the risk of infection.
- The transplanted kidney may stop working over time, or your body could reject the kidney.

How and Where Do I Start?

- Tell your kidney doctor that you are interested in a kidney transplant.
- Ask for a referral to a transplant center.
- The transplant center will:
  - Review your health and do testing.
  - Decide if a transplant is a good option for you.
  - Explain the reasons if you are not approved.
  - Talk with you about living donors and the transplant waiting list if you are approved.

Important: The transplant center, not your kidney doctor, decides who can receive a kidney transplant.

*If you are approved, you will be placed on the transplant waiting list. You may get a kidney from a living donor or wait for a kidney that is a good match for you.

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.
  - 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

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 is a blood relative, such as a parent, brother, sister, or adult child. The donor must choose to donate willingly. A living donor transplant may happen sooner than waiting for a deceased donor kidney.

Living Unrelated Donor

A living unrelated donor is someone who is not a blood relative, such as a spouse, partner, friend, or coworker. The donor must choose to donate willingly. Living donor transplants often have excellent outcomes.

Kidney Donor Exchange

If a donor is willing, but isn't a good match for their recipient, they can still donate to someone else on the waitlist. Kidney exchange, or paired donation, involves matching up two pairs of donors and recipients. Kidneys are "swapped" so each recipient gets a compatible kidney.

Living donor kidneys, whether from a related or unrelated donor, often allow transplantation sooner and may last longer than kidneys from deceased donors.

Ask Your Care Team:

- Is transplantation a good choice for me?
- How do I get added to the 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?



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For more information or to file a grievance, please contact:

Qsource ESRD Networks
3725 Champion Hills Dr., Ste. 3100
Memphis, TN 38125

Network 16: Toll-Free: (800) 456-6919
Network 17: Toll-Free: (800) 444-9965

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