

Considering Kidney Transplant

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If your kidneys are failing, you can choose dialysis or kidney transplant to supplement your lost kidney function. The risks and benefits of kidney transplant vary, based on your age and overall health.

If you are eligible to receive a donated kidney, you may be able to delay dialysis and enjoy a better quality of life. People with successful kidney transplants tend to enjoy more freedom in their schedule and a less restricted diet than people on dialysis.

When to Begin the Process

You can begin contacting kidney transplant centers once your kidney doctor (nephrologist) has told you that you will need dialysis within two to three years. A kidney transplant team made up of different specialists and social workers will evaluate you to determine whether you are eligible to receive a kidney transplant.

Finding a Kidney Donor

In the case of kidney transplant, a family member, friend, neighbor or even someone who wishes to remain anonymous may be able to donate a kidney to you. If you know someone who may be willing to donate a kidney to you, the individual must be generally healthy and undergo a physical and psychological evaluation to determine if he or she could donate a kidney.

If you have a willing living kidney donor who is medically fit to donate a kidney but is not a medical match with you for some reason, you and your willing kidney donor may be able to take part in a paired kidney donor exchange. In this program, you and your willing kidney donor would be matched with another willing kidney donor and someone else with chronic kidney disease, until a medical match is achieved.

If you do not have a living donor, you can ask to be placed on a national waiting list to receive a transplant from an organ donor who has recently died.



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Kidney Transplant Outcomes

Success rates for kidney transplant are high. One year after kidney donation, 97.9% of patients who receive a kidney from a living donor survive, and 95.1% of the donated kidneys are functioning, according to the National Kidney Foundation. For patients who receive a transplant from a recently deceased cadaver, 94.4% of patients are alive one year after donation, and 89% of donated kidneys are functioning successfully. About 40% of kidney transplants are from living donors.

Kidney Transplant and Dialysis

Studies show that people who receive a kidney transplant before they begin dialysis tend to do somewhat better with their kidney disease, compared with those who receive a transplant once they have already started dialysis.

If you receive a kidney transplant and are not currently on dialysis, you may still require dialysis treatment later.

More about Kidney Transplant

- Kidney transplant surgery takes about 3 to 8 hours. The length of your hospital stay following the surgery depends on your condition.
- Once you receive the transplant, you will need to take medication that keeps your body from rejecting the donated organ by suppressing your immune system. Your ability to follow your medication schedule impacts the success of your transplant.
- Most private medical insurers cover many of the costs associated with kidney transplant. If yours does not, most prospective kidney transplant recipients are for Medicare, which can help to cover the surgery and some of your eligible medication costs following surgery. Your kidney transplant center can help you determine your coverage options.

For more information, visit: <http://www.kidney.org/transplantation> or <http://www.unos.org/donation>.