

Deciding if You Are Ready for a Kidney Transplant

Kidney Transplant

Deciding to have a kidney transplant can be an anxious and exciting time. You may be ready to enjoy freedom from dialysis but you may also have concerns about transplant surgery and recovery.

The members of the transplant team are available to answer your questions and talk about your concerns.

The following information includes an overview of what you may need to think about or what you need to know before you consider kidney transplant.

Information Session

Abbott Northwestern Hospital offers an information session for potential recipients and their family members. A coordinator will call you to make an appointment.

You will have a chance to learn about the evaluation process, types of donors, risks and benefits, transplant surgery, recovery and post-transplant care.

You are encouraged to bring a family member or friend with you to this session.

Tests You May Need

There are several tests you may need as part of your evaluation. Some of these include:

- lab tests for blood typing, tissue typing and crossmatch
- heart stress test or echocardiogram
- chest X-ray

- routine cancer screenings
- vaccinations
- dental exam.

As part of the evaluation, you will also have consults with the following members of the transplant team:

- coordinator
- surgeon
- social worker
- dietitian.

Deciding on a Type of Donor

If you are a candidate for a kidney transplant, you will be placed on the nationwide kidney transplant waiting list. You may also try to find a compatible living donor while you are waiting.

- **Living donor:** A living donor is an adult who has offered to be evaluated to potentially donate a kidney to you. The donor's evaluation includes testing to make sure he or she is healthy enough to donate. Testing is also done to determine if the donor's kidney is compatible with you.
- **Deceased donor:** A deceased donor is a person who has recently died and whose organs are suitable for transplant. The donor, family or both consented to organ donation.

(over)

Questions To Answer

- Do you have someone to help during your recovery? If you live alone, you will need to make plans to stay with someone or have someone stay with you for a few days after you get home.
- Do you have someone who will be able to drive you to your appointments for the first few weeks after surgery?
- Are you prepared to take anti-rejection medications as long as your kidney is working?
- Are you prepared for all of the tests, clinic appointments and blood draws you will need?
- Do you understand the risks and benefits of transplant?
- Do you understand your insurance coverage? Do you know what your out-of-pocket costs will be? Ask your insurance provider the following:
 - exactly what services are covered
 - how much of the bill you will need to pay yourself
 - if the medications you will need to take are covered and for how long.

Always write down the name, title and phone number of the person you speak with at the insurance company. Write down notes and ask the person to clarify any information you do not understand.

Things To Think About

- If your health changes while you are waiting for a kidney, you may no longer be able to have a transplant.
- There are no guarantees with transplant or how well the transplant will work. You may have complications after transplant. While most complications can be managed, some may be severe.
- The average waiting time on the deceased donor list is 6 to 8 years.
- While you are on the list you:
 - will need updates once a year at Abbott Northwestern Hospital
 - will need to get routine health screens and vaccinations with your primary care provider
 - may need to start dialysis.
- When you are called for a transplant, a coordinator may call you at any time of the day or night. You will need to respond to the call in a timely fashion and may need to get to the hospital quickly when called.