

Deciding if You Are Ready for a Kidney Transplant

Kidney Transplant

Deciding to have a kidney transplant can be an anxious time. You may be ready to enjoy freedom from dialysis but you may also be worried 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 surgery.

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 benefits and risks of transplant surgery and recovery. Types of donors will also be reviewed.

You be able to ask questions. Bring a family member or friend with you to this session.

Tests You Will Need

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

- blood tests for blood typing, tissue typing and crossmatching
- heart stress test or echocardiogram
- chest X-ray
- bone density test
- routine cancer tests
- vaccinations
- dental exam.

You will also have a chance to meet the following members of the transplant team:

- coordinator
- surgeon
- social worker
- dietitian.

Members of the transplant team will talk with you about the risks and benefits of having a transplant. You will need to decide if you are ready to make the changes that are needed for a transplant.

Deciding on a Type of Donor

If you are a candidate for a kidney transplant, you may try to find a living donor or you may be placed on the nationwide kidney donor waiting list.

- **Living donor:** An adult has offered to donate a kidney to you. The donor will have testing done to make sure he or she is healthy enough to donate. He or she will also have tests done to see if the kidney matches you.
- **Deceased donor:** A kidney becomes available from a person who has recently died.

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 be able to drive you to your appointments for the first few weeks after surgery? (You will be able to drive about 2 to 4 weeks after you get home.)
- Are you prepared to take anti-rejection medicines 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 the transplant?

- Do you understand your insurance coverage? Do you know what your out-of-pocket costs will be? Ask your insurance provider:
 - exactly what services are covered
 - how much of the bill you will need to pay yourself (copays)
 - if the medicines 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 to transplant or how well the kidney will work.
- The average waiting time on the deceased donor list is 3 to 6 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
 - may need to start or stay on 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 get to the hospital quickly when called.