



End-Stage Renal Disease Network of New York
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Transplant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Kidney Transplant?

A kidney transplant is a surgical procedure to place a functioning kidney from a donor (deceased or living) into a person whose kidneys no longer function properly.

Do both of my kidneys get transplanted?

Only one donated kidney is needed to replace two failed kidneys, making living-donor kidney transplantation an option. If a compatible living donor isn't available for a kidney transplant, your name may be placed on a kidney transplant waiting list to receive a kidney from a deceased donor.

What is the difference between living donor and deceased donor organ donation?

Deceased donor organ donation: Deceased donor organ donation is donation of an organ or organs after a person dies.

Living donor kidney donation: Fortunately, waiting for an organ from a deceased donor isn't the only option. For many people, living donation is an exciting possibility that enables a person who is still living to share an organ or portion of an organ with a family member, spouse, or a friend.

The benefits of living donation include:

- Long delays waiting on national lists may be avoided
- The recipient may be in better health due to reduced time to transplant
- The donated organ may be healthier than one received from a deceased donor—and the transplanted kidney may begin to work faster
- Surgery can be scheduled for a time when both the donor and the recipient are in the best condition possible
- According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) and the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR), five-year success rates for people who've received a kidney through living donation are approximately 10% higher than those who received a kidney from a deceased donor.

What can I expect my physical activity to be post-transplant?

In the days immediately following your transplant, you can expect to be tired. Transplantation is major surgery. However, you should begin to feel better and stronger each day—and you may be encouraged to resume physical activity, including work.

Exercise according to your transplant team's instructions, generally at least 5 days a week. Start with something simple, like walking. Increase your time and pace slowly to reach a minimum of 30 minutes a day. Pace yourself so you don't feel rushed or overtired. Your transplant team will help you plan a proper exercise program.

What medications will I have to take post-transplant?

To help ensure your transplant is a success, your doctor will intend for you to take several different medications to slow down your body's immune system and make your body less likely to reject your transplanted organ. This process is called immunosuppression.

Although your doctor will work to prevent rejection, it can still occur. If you experience a rejection episode, your doctor may decide to treat it with different or additional medications, or simply with a dose adjustment of the medication or medications that you are already taking.

Sometimes medications such as anti-infective (used to prevent or treat infections) or anti-ulcer (used to treat digestive problems) medications may be necessary. Many other medications may also be used but are not discussed here. Always ask your transplant team any questions you might have about the medications your doctor intends for you to take.

Your biggest responsibility post-transplant is keeping your organ, and yourself, healthy. Proper adherence to your regimen is critical to your long-term health.

Medications commonly used in transplantation include:

- Anti-rejection medications
- Anti-infective and anti-ulcer medications

Because some medications may produce unwanted side effects, it is important that you ask questions and talk freely with your transplant team about how you are feeling.

What is the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)?

UNOS is a private, nonprofit organization that matches available organ donors with those awaiting transplant through the national Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN). UNOS administers this program under contract with the US Department of Health and Human Services. Members of UNOS include all transplant programs, organizations that find organs, and tissue typing laboratories in the United States.

UNOS guarantees that all persons who need a transplant have an equal opportunity to receive their organs, regardless of age, sex, race, social status, etc. Who gets an available organ is determined by a number of factors, including the length of time a person has been on the waiting list, blood type (A/B/O typing), body size, and health status as determined by UNOS criteria. If you would like to learn more, contact UNOS at 1-888-894-6361.