



Maintain Your Patients' Active Status on the Transplant Waitlist with Monthly Blood Samples

Frequently Asked Questions and Best Practices

To receive organ offers, patients must provide blood samples to transplant centers at least EVERY MONTH.

What is the monthly blood sample?

Once a patient is listed on the UNOS Kidney Transplant Waitlist, they are eligible for a deceased donor kidney offer. To remain eligible for a deceased donation, patients must submit a monthly blood sample (sometimes referred to as a "SERA sample" or "Transplant Blood"). The blood that is drawn is sent to EACH transplant center where the patient is waitlisted.

What happens to the blood sample at the transplant center lab?

When a deceased donor kidney becomes available, the blood of the donor is compared (or cross-matched) to the patient's blood sample. If there is no blood sample on file for your patient within the last month, this comparison cannot take place. This may result in the patient being overlooked for that available organ and may delay their chances of getting transplanted. Alternatively, if the sample is not available, the patient may be asked to travel to the hospital to have their SERA drawn to ensure that they are included in the crossmatch and/or have a sample available for the next 30 days.

What is cross-matching and how many patients are compared per available organ?

When an organ becomes available, a list is generated from UNOs for each eligible transplant center. From there, the transplant center generates a list of patients who are preliminarily eligible for the offer. The blood comparison, or cross-matching, is then done to confirm which patients are eligible for the donor kidney. The process takes up to eight hours. From there, a decision is made on who will be called in for the transplant. It is unknown how many possible patients will remain on the list after the cross-matching is complete.



Due to the expected high volume of possible patients, it is of utmost importance to ensure your patient has an updated blood sample at the lab every month to avoid missing their chance at getting called for a kidney.

How many blood samples will need to be sent?

The number of blood samples depends on the number of sites where the patient is waitlisted. If patients are listed at multiple sites, each transplant center will need this blood sample every month. All of the required tubes can be collected at one time.

Where do I find information about each transplant center's blood sample instructions?

Once the patient is activated on the waitlist, the transplant center will provide the patient or dialysis center with blood tubes, pre-printed patient labels, and shipping mailers. Within 10 business days, the patient and dialysis center will receive a letter indicating that the patient is active on the waitlist. This letter will include instructions for shipping the SERA sample. If you have not received this vital information, reach out to the transplant center to confirm that the patient's status is active and communicate the need for this information.

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Please follow these Best Practices to ensure this sample is drawn every month:

1. ASSIGN a “champion” staff member and a back up to be accountable for ensuring this blood sample collection is completed each month

- a. Create accountability for completion of samples, inventory of kits, and reordering kits from the transplant centers, as needed.
- b. Have the collection of these samples be a reportable item at huddles and monthly QAPI meetings.

2. DEVELOP a sustainable process for the drawing and shipping of blood samples for all waitlisted patients

- a. Consider placing a monthly reminder in the EMR.
- b. Discuss with and educate patients about the importance of ensuring the sample is drawn and sent by dialysis staff.
- c. Enlist the patients in helping remind staff of their blood sample.
- d. Consider the process for patients who need samples drawn more frequently, if applicable.

3. ENSURE the sample is going to all transplant centers where the patient is waitlisted and that each sample is sent appropriately

- a. If a patient is multi-listed, a blood sample will need to be sent to each transplant center.
- b. The transplant centers will provide blood draw and shipping instructions. Double check that the tubes are labeled properly, and include the initials of the caregiver who performed the draw and draw date.
- c. Validate that the shipping address is accurate.
- d. Consider using a tracking system to document when samples are drawn and sent.

4. VERIFY that the samples arrived.

The transplant center coordinator may not keep track of the blood samples arriving every month at the lab. It is the responsibility of the patient with the help of the dialysis facility to ensure that this task gets completed.

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