

# Get the Facts: Kidney Transplantation

*A kidney transplant is an operation during which someone gets a new kidney. The new kidney comes from another person. The person giving the kidney is called a donor.*

## Types of Kidney Donors



A **living donor** can be a family member. Or a living donor could be someone who is not related.

- The donor is checked by the transplant center to make sure he or she is healthy enough to donate.
- The center also makes sure the donor is offering his or her kidney willingly, without pressure from anyone.

A **non-living donor** is someone who has recently died.

- The person has agreed to donate before passing away.
- Or the family agrees to donate the kidney of the family member.

## What do I need to know about getting a kidney transplant?

- The transplanted kidney cleans your blood the same way that your kidneys did when they were healthy.
- Only one kidney is transplanted. A person can live a healthy life with only one working kidney.
- Your doctor will send you to a transplant center. You will be checked by a transplant team.
  - You must be healthy enough to have the surgery. You must also be able to take medicine to help your body accept the new kidney.
  - The donor kidney must match your blood and tissue types.
  - You will be put on a waiting list to get a kidney from a non-living donor. This is because more people need kidneys than there are kidneys available. You can be on more than one waiting list, even one in a different state, if you are able to travel.

## How will my life change after I get a transplant?

- Once you receive a transplant, you will need to see your care team on a regular basis.
- You will have to take kidney medicine for as long as your new kidney lasts.
- Your diet may change after you receive a transplant. Talk to your dietitian for more information.

## How will I pay for my kidney transplant?

The social worker at your dialysis center will work with you to figure out how your costs will be paid.

- Medicare typically covers 80 percent of the costs. This is only if the transplant is done in a hospital approved by Medicare to do kidney transplants. If you have private insurance, you should check with your insurance company to see what costs are covered.
- You will need to take medicine to lower the chance of your body rejecting the transplant. The costs of these drugs may not be covered.

## What are some outcomes of a kidney transplant?

- Your overall health and quality of life may improve.
- Complications can happen with any surgery. Speak to your transplant care team about what could happen with a kidney transplant.
- Your body may reject the kidney. Talk with your transplant care team about this.



The information provided was adopted from the United Network for Organ Sharing and National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. For additional information, please visit their websites at: [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org) and [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov). This material was prepared by the End Stage Renal Disease National Coordinating Center (ESRD NCC) contractor under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy nor imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. FL-ESRD NCC-7N5TD1-05112020-01