

Kidney Transplant Questions and Answers

Will I feel better after a kidney transplant?

Undergoing kidney transplantation will help restore kidney function thus eliminating the need for dialysis. Most patients recover strength, and energy, and are expected to be able to live twice as long, as compared to remaining on dialysis.

How will I be evaluated as a kidney transplant recipient?

The process begins with a referral from your physician. Our transplant specialists review your medical records, and contact you and your physician to inform you of expectations and schedule a half-day appointment for a pre-transplant evaluation.

What is the process to find a donated kidney?

After you have completed the evaluation process by the transplant team, and a decision has been made that you are a good candidate for transplantation, your name is added to the UNOS national donor waiting list. There are two options for obtaining a kidney: from deceased donors or from a live donor. The average wait for a deceased donor kidney is 4 to 6 years. A living donor is the ideal choice as it expedites the waiting period. A living donor can be related or non-related and must undergo compatibility tests to ensure there is a match.

What is the length of a hospital stay after a kidney transplant?

The average hospital stay for a kidney transplant is seven days, but it varies for each patient.

Will I have to go back to the hospital after transplant?

Organ rejection is a concern after transplant. Transplant patients have a schedule of necessary follow-up visits with the Transplant Team which will include clinic and hospital visits.

How safe is the donor operation?

Our experience with living donors is greater than any other Texas program. Most donor operations are now done with laparoscopic techniques which speed recovery of the donor. Typically, donors return to normal activities within a few weeks.

Will I be on medications for a long time after the transplant?

Transplant patients generally start out with six to eight medications in addition to their anti-rejection medications. By six months, they generally take two to three per day. Eventually, patients are required to take only their anti-rejection medication for the rest of their life.

Will insurance pay for the transplant surgery and medications?

If a kidney transplant is medically necessary, the patient's health insurance covers the majority of the costs. The transplant reimbursement process can also cover the donor's medical costs.

What organization oversees transplant centers?

The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is contracted by the federal government to administer the deceased donor organ waiting list, as well as collect data regarding patient outcomes for transplant centers.