



# Kidney transplants

When you have kidney failure, you'll need to have dialysis or a kidney transplant in order to live. We'll help you understand the transplant process and the pros and cons so you can choose the treatment that's right for you.

A kidney transplant means getting a healthy kidney donated from another person. This allows the new, healthy kidney to do the work that your kidneys can no longer do.



### A donated kidney for transplant can come from:

- A spouse, other relative or friend
- Someone you don't know who wants to donate a kidney
- Someone you don't know who has recently passed away

## Making a match

If you choose to have a transplant, the new kidney must match your blood and tissue types. If it doesn't, your body will reject it, and the new kidney will stop working. Your health care team will need to learn a lot about you to see if a transplant is the right choice.

### Your health care team will:

- Give you a complete physical exam
- Review your health records, including how well you take your medicines as prescribed
- Order tests to learn your blood and tissue type
- Order tests to learn more about your overall health



## Timing a transplant

Getting a transplant before starting dialysis is called a *preemptive transplant*. It means you avoid dialysis altogether. Getting a transplant not long after your kidneys fail (but having spent some time on dialysis) is called an *early transplant*.

### Some research shows that both types of transplants can:<sup>1</sup>

- Lead to better long-term health
- Allow you to keep working
- Save time and money
- Improve your quality of life

## Life after a kidney transplant

For most people, getting a transplant can be a good option. A kidney transplant can help you get back the life you had before you had chronic kidney disease (CKD). And according to the National Kidney Foundation, studies show that people with kidney transplants live longer than those who stay on dialysis.<sup>1</sup> Even so, your body can reject your new kidney at any time — even years after kidney transplant surgery. That's why you'll need to take antirejection medicines if you choose to have a transplant. These medicines help prevent your body from rejecting the new kidney. You'll have to take them for as long as your new kidney is working.

<sup>1</sup>The National Kidney Foundation. Kidney Transplant. January 26, 2017. Available at: [Kidney.org/atoz/content/kidney-transplant](https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/kidney-transplant). Accessed November 12, 2020.



You can use this pros and cons list as you think about what's right for you.

### Things to consider with a kidney transplant

#### Pros

- You get a healthy kidney.
- You may feel healthier and have a better quality of life.
- You can eat and drink more of what you want. (Of course, eating a heart-healthy diet would be best.)
- You won't need dialysis.
- You may live longer than people who stay on dialysis.<sup>1</sup>

#### Cons

- A kidney transplant is major surgery.
- There will be risks, such as infection and rejection.
- You will need to take antirejection medicines long term.
- You will have many medical tests before the transplant.
- You may have to wait years for someone to donate a kidney.
- You may need to start and remain on dialysis until a kidney becomes available.



**It's always your choice which treatment you decide to choose.  
Talk to your doctor about whether a kidney transplant is the right  
choice for you.**

<sup>1</sup>The National Kidney Foundation. Kidney Transplant. January 26, 2017. Available at: [Kidney.org/atoz/content/kidney-transplant](https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/kidney-transplant). Accessed November 12, 2020.

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