

Kidney Transplantation: Am I Ready?

By Linda Harte, RN, BSN, MA, CNN, CCT

Consider these important questions if you are interested in a kidney transplant.

Transplantation is just one treatment for chronic kidney disease. Your health care team can help you decide if it is the right one for you. Not everyone is a candidate for a kidney transplant because of his or her medical condition. But if you are interested in one, you should ask questions and find out more about this treatment. If your physician recommends that you consider transplantation, he or she will refer you to a transplant center for evaluation.

Before you meet with the transplant team, there are a few basic medical exams, x-rays and tests you should have if you have not already had them in the past year. Getting these done, or at least scheduled, will help you get on the transplant list sooner.

All of these are part of health screening that everyone needs regularly. Ask your doctor or nurse for copies of the results to take with you to your transplant appointments. The transplant team will order additional testing depending on your specific health needs.

If there is someone who wishes to donate a kidney to you, this potential donor will have to be screened and tested to make sure their donation will be suitable for you.

The transplant team will arrange for you to talk with a social worker or psychologist to discuss how you are coping with your disease and

treatments, how well you take care of yourself and to be sure you are “mentally” healthy enough to go through transplant surgery and care afterwards. You should ask yourself these questions to prepare for a possible transplant:

- Do I take my medications regularly as prescribed?
- Do I dialyze regularly and attend all medical appointments?
- Will I be able to take care of myself when I go home from the hospital?
- Do I have someone to take me to my appointments after the transplant until I can drive myself?
- Do I have a telephone so I can call if I have questions or so the transplant nurse can notify me of all test results and possible changes in my medication after the transplant?
- Does my health insurance have certain transplant programs I must use?
- Have I talked with someone at my insurance company about my transplant benefits?
- Does my health insurance cover the anti-rejection and anti-viral medications?
- Will I be able to pay the co-pay?
- Will I be able to afford the cost of anti-rejection medications, or have insurance coverage, when Medicare coverage expires?

The answers to these questions are just as important as the physical part of your evaluation. After

you are on the transplant list and waiting for that call, you need to be ready. You might want to periodically ask yourself these questions:

- Does the transplant center have my current address and phone number?
- Do they have alternative numbers or people to call to find me (cell phone, pager, work number) when a kidney is available?
- Do I let them know when I am going to be out of town or unavailable?
- Has my insurance coverage changed and, if so, do they have my new information?
- Have I called to let them know about any changes in my health, hospital stays, or new medications?
- Have I kept my appointments for re-evaluation every 6 to 12 months? Be sure to stay in touch with the transplant coordinator about any changes in your life.

It is very upsetting to both you and the transplant team when a call has been made to inform you that a kidney is available for you and they are not able to find you, or you do not have insurance approval. A successful transplant may greatly improve the quality of your life. Be sure you are ready by being an active part of your health care team!

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