

Transplant Series

Are there different (kinds of kidney transplant)?

There are three kinds of transplants:

- Living-related
- Living-non-related
- Cadaver

A living – related donor is a family member who is related to you by blood and who agrees to give you one of his or her kidneys. This kind of donor could be a parent, brother, sister, or other blood relative. Blood and tissue type are always tested to see if there is a good match. Just because you are related to someone does not mean that your blood and tissue type will match.

A living non-related donor is a person who is not related to you, but whose blood and tissue type matches your own. A friend, spouse, or co-worker can be a donor and agree to give you a kidney.

Cadaver donors are people who have just died and whose families have given their organs for others to use. For this kind of transplant, you need to put your name on an official list with others who also need a kidney. Talk to your doctor, social worker, or nurse about what must be done to get your name on the list. When a kidney becomes available, you can always choose not have to have the transplant, but you will not have this choice unless your name is on the list. When a kidney that matches your blood and tissue type becomes available you and your doctor will be called and surgery will be done right away. Finding a kidney that is a good match may take a short time or several years.

The Choice to Stop Treatment

Just because there are treatment options does not mean you have to be treated. This is a choice you can make, but understand that treatment is keeping you alive. When you withdraw from treatment, you put your life at risk. If you stop treatment completely, you will die. Your kidney doctor can give you more information about what happens when you stop treatment. This is a personal choice that may be hard to make. Talk with your family and your health care team if you want to stop treatment.

Advance Directives

If you were to have a life-threatening medical emergency, you may not be able to say what kind of treatment you want. You have the right to choose ahead of time and what you want done in case of such an emergency. An advance directive, sometimes called a “living will,” is a legal paper that says what you want done at that time. Your social worker can tell you about advance directives. Tell your kidney doctor and center if you have an advance directive. Make sure your doctor writes in your orders that you have one and that an original copy of it is in your files.