

Introduction

Kidney Transplantation is the surgical procedure of placing a fully functioning kidney into a person suffering from severe kidney failure. This procedure is usually an elective one, performed in patients who have undergone careful preoperative assessment and preparation, since dialysis enables these patients to be maintained in relatively good condition until the time of surgery. The transplanted kidney may originate from a deceased donor (cadaver transplantation) or from a related or unrelated person (living transplantation).

If you're recently diagnosed

When kidney failure is diagnosed, people can have a range of different emotional responses - disbelief, fear, anger - sometimes all of these. Whatever you are feeling at present, please remember that it can be very helpful to talk about your feelings with people who care about you.

What causes kidney failure?

There are a number of known causes of kidney failure but in quite a lot of people the cause is never found. The commonest causes are diabetes, high blood pressure and a painless inflammation of the kidneys called glomerulonephritis. There is a progressive loss of the filtering units (nephrons) in the kidney.

Other common causes are the inherited condition of cysts in the kidneys (polycystic kidney disease); repeated kidney infections or kidney stones and obstruction to the urine flow.

What happens when the kidneys fail?

If the kidneys are damaged, they may carry on producing urine but become less efficient at removing waste products from the blood. Instead, the waste products continue to circulate and build up in the bloodstream.

At the same time, without the hormones that a healthy kidney would produce, the bone marrow becomes less efficient at producing red cells, so anaemia develops.

For some patients, this may be a very gradual process. Over time however, it can cause quite a wide range of symptoms. Not everyone will experience all the symptoms.

Also, because it can be such a gradual process, some people don't even realise the effect the symptoms are having until - with treatment - they begin to feel better.



What are the symptoms of kidney failure?

Some of the symptoms are:

- Generally feeling ill
- Lacking interest in everyday activities; difficulty in concentrating or relaxing
- Tiredness and loss of energy
- Shortness of breath
- Altered taste sensation/appetite
- Increased night-time urine production
- Sickness and nausea
- Itch
- Swelling of the legs

Where does your new kidney come from?

Kidneys for transplantation come from two sources: living donors and deceased (non-living) donors. Living donors are usually immediate family members or sometimes spouses. Deceased donor kidneys usually come from people who have willed their kidneys before their death by signing organ donor cards. Permission for donation can also be given by the deceased person's family at the time of death.

All donors are carefully screened to make sure there is a suitable match and to prevent any transmissible diseases or other complications.

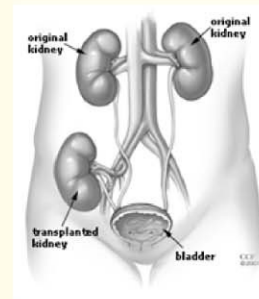
What are the benefits of kidney transplantation?

A successful kidney transplant gives you increased strength, stamina, and energy. After transplantation, you should be able to return to a more normal lifestyle and have more control over your daily living. You can have a normal diet and more normal fluid intake.

If you were dependent on dialysis before the transplant, you'll have more freedom because you won't be bound to your dialysis schedules.

Anemia, a common problem with kidney failure, can be corrected after transplantation. If you have hypertension (high blood pressure), you could be on fewer blood pressure medications after transplantation.

What happens during the kidney transplant procedure?



Kidney transplantation involves placing a healthy kidney into the body where it can perform all of the functions that a failing kidney cannot.

The new kidney is placed on the lower right or left side of your abdomen where it is surgically connected to nearby blood vessels. Placing the kidney in this position allows it to be easily connected to

blood vessels and the bladder. The vein and artery of your new kidney are attached to your vein and artery. The new kidney's ureter is attached to your bladder to allow urine to pass out of your body.

A kidney transplant operation is done under general anaesthetic and usually takes between two and three hours. If all is well, you will be able to eat and drink the following day.

What happens to my old kidneys?

In most cases, the diseased kidneys are not removed. There are three conditions that might require your diseased kidneys to be removed:

- Repeated infection that could spread to the transplanted kidney
- Uncontrollable hypertension caused by your original kidneys
- Backup of urine into your kidneys (a condition called reflux)

After the transplant

After the operation, you are monitored very closely. Sometimes the kidney does not work immediately (primary non-function) - the doctors may decide to do a kidney biopsy. This is done under local anesthetic and is quite safe. Even when the transplanted kidneys and patients are a close match, the immune system recognizes the kidney as "foreign" to the body, and tries to reject it.



What are the risks of kidney transplantation?

The risks of kidney transplantation are the same as those of any surgery. There is the risk of bleeding, infection, or breathing problems. You might also experience some side effects from the medications, and you could be more prone to infections, since the medicine you will take after transplantation lowers your body's ability to fight infection.

There is also the risk of rejection. Since the body recognizes the new kidney as a foreign object, it will normally try to get rid of it or "reject" it. However, you are given medicine to prevent rejection.

Because of years of experience, research, and improved medicines that prevent rejection, kidney transplants are very successful with few complications after transplantation.



Questions To Ask Your Doctor About Kidney Transplantation

Who would be qualified to donate a kidney to me (family, spouse, and friends)?
How can potential interested donors be evaluated?
How is the surgery performed?
How long does the surgery take?
What medications will you be prescribing?
What are the side effects of immunosuppressive drugs?
How long do I have to take transplant medications?
What should be expected after the surgery?

For Consultation,

call 021 – 35661000 ext 255 & 355

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