

# Transplantation

Kidney transplants have revolutionised life for many people with kidney failure. Dialysis only keeps you OK – a successful transplant restores your health. This is a very short introduction. If you are likely to be a transplant patient, you will need to know more. Further information is available from Transplant Units. In Edinburgh, the [Transplant Coordinators](#) keep this information.

This is a short account. For more information see the the [further information section at the foot of this page](#).

## **Am I suitable for a kidney transplant?**

Medical staff will discuss transplantation with you. For the majority of patients transplantation is the ultimate goal, but for some, particularly those with other medical conditions, long-term dialysis may be the best option.

If transplantation is an option for you, you will undergo a series of blood tests and X-rays. After this, you will be referred to a transplant surgeon for further assessment. At this stage you will be given more information about the actual procedure.

## **Where does the transplant come from?**

Most patients receive a kidney from someone who has died in hospital, usually on a life support machine. However the best transplants come from living people – who might be a close relative, a partner or close friend. Live donor transplants can be carefully planned, instead of coming as a surprise at any time, and the kidney is proved in advance to be very healthy.

## **What sort of operation is needed?**

The transplanted kidney is placed in one or other groin beneath the skin and muscle. As with most operations, you may feel a bit groggy for a few days.

All being well, you will soon be up and about and home within a couple of weeks.

## **How long will I have to wait?**

The number of kidneys required greatly exceeds the number available, and you may have to wait a long time (sometimes years) before a kidney suited to your

blood group and tissue type is found. Some patients, however, are lucky and get a kidney transplant within a few months. The time you wait depends entirely on availability and suitability of the organ available to best suit you. It is not a queue - it is to some extent a matter of luck.

## What special medication will I need?

To prevent your body rejecting the new kidney, you will have to take some special drugs. These are tailored to each individual's requirements, but you will need to take at least one anti-rejection drug every day for as long as you have the transplant. Some of the medicines used are described in [Immunosuppressive drugs for kidney diseases](#).

## Diet after transplant

There is no need for a special renal diet following a transplant.

You will, however, be advised about a healthy diet containing not too much sugar or salt, plenty of fruit, vegetables and fibre, but with less fat, particularly animal fat.

You will be encouraged to maintain a healthy weight for your height.

## I'm diabetic. Can I have a pancreatic transplant too?

Pancreas transplants are dealt with very thoroughly in the booklet available in the further information section, just below.

## Further information

<a href="#">Transplant booklet</a> - download our full information booklet (487 KB, so will take a long time to download via a modem connection)	You can download our full patient information booklet to obtain more complete information. The booklet is written for all Scottish units, only the first section contains information specific to Edinburgh. It is 22 pages long and you will need an up to date version of <a href="#">Adobe Acrobat Reader</a> (free) to see and print this out. Obtain the reader by following the link if you don't have it.
<a href="#">Pancreas transplants booklet</a> - download our full information booklet (230kb)	This is section 3 of our full transplant information booklet. Again requires <a href="#">Adobe Acrobat Reader</a> to read it.
<a href="#">Photo-story</a>	Our <a href="#">photo-story</a> shows what it is like to have a transplant. In this example, it is a live related transplant.
<a href="#">NKF Transplant info</a>	The information from the <a href="#">NKF(UK)</a> is more detailed than given above, and is very good.
<a href="#">Unrelated living donors</a>	Information from <a href="#">ULTRA</a> about this very successful type of kidney donation - from husbands, wives, and other individuals. Common in some countries but still relatively uncommon in most of the Western World.
<a href="#">UK Transplant</a>	The UK Transplant site now has a lot of excellent information and links

<a href="#">History</a>	The fascinating <a href="#">Edinburgh story</a> and a summary of the <a href="#">world history</a>
<a href="#">The Edinburgh Unit</a>	The Edinburgh Transplant Unit. Information about the unit is available within this website.
<a href="#">The Cambridge Unit</a>	Has a useful site.
<a href="#">Skin cancer in transplant recipients</a>	Patient information leaflet

**Acknowledgements:** The authors of this page were Richard Dingwall and his colleagues from the Community Dialysis Team. It was first published in 2001 and reviewed in May 2010 by Lorna Marson. The date it was last modified is shown in the footer.