



## KIDNEYS R US

FROM THE  
QIRN3 PATIENT ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

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### Five Steps to a Kidney Transplant

#### 1. Educate yourself

If you think a kidney transplant may be good for you discuss it with someone whose opinion you trust: your kidney doctor, dialysis nurse, social worker, family, friends and patients who have had a transplant already. Make your evaluation appointment at the transplant center where you would like to receive a kidney. Remember, it will be the place you will go for your surgery and follow up care immediately after your transplant and until your new kidney is stable enough for you to go back to your regular kidney doctor. Also, while the transplant center staff is evaluating you, you can be evaluating them; after all, they will be taking care of you after your transplant! Ask someone to go with you for company and to help you remember and understand the information you will receive. Two heads are better than one especially since it will be a long and busy day for you. If you think you'd like a transplant but are unsure: go anyway. You will not waste your time and you will know more than you do now about transplant.

#### 2. Take charge

Plan to keep all of your forms and letters from the transplant center, copies of your medical records and any educational materials in a safe place - a folder, large envelope or notebook will do. Look through it regularly. If you have had any of the required blood work or other testing, try to gather copies of it in time for your appointment and bring it with you for the transplant center to copy and return to you. Better yet, have your records mailed or faxed before your appointment date. If you need help, ask the dialysis staff or the staff at your doctor's office for assistance. If you are unable to do this beforehand, you can sign a permission form when you arrive for your appointment so that your medical records can be released to the transplant center.

We Remember...

Organ and  
Tissue  
Donors



#### 3. Prepare for your evaluation appointment

Be prepared! Bring a list of your medications and doctors you see for special conditions. Be ready to answer questions about your past medical history and to be examined by the transplant team. If you have a condition such as heart disease, hepatitis, HIV, history of cancer or substance abuse, try to have copies of your most recent tests, letters of medical clearance or special blood work with you for the team to look at during the appointment.



#### 4. Keep your evaluation day appointment

The transplant center will call or send a letter confirming your appointment and provide information about what to bring with you. Bring a snack if you are diabetic. If you have questions or special needs, call the center at least one day before your appointment to discuss. During the session, you will be educated about transplant and meet individually with members of the transplant team. The transplant doctor will examine you and ask about your medical history. Your height and weight will be measured and you will be seen by a dietitian for counseling to help you reach or maintain a healthy weight for the transplant.

The transplant coordinator will interview you as will the social worker and the financial coordinator who will check your insurance coverage for a kidney transplant and anti-rejection medications. The social worker will discuss your thoughts and feelings about transplant and how it will affect you and your family as well as your finances (co-pays and limits of your coverage). If you have a history of alcohol or drug abuse you may need to have additional blood or urine testing, give proof of completing a rehabilitation program or attend one if you have not.

You may be able to have some testing done at the transplant center during or after your appointment. It can include blood work, chest x-ray, EKG, or echocardiogram. Usually, the transplant doctor will order other tests. The transplant coordinator will discuss them with you and help you arrange appointments for testing you need. All testing is done to make sure you are healthy enough for a kidney transplant; also done are cancer screenings (mammogram, Pap smear for women, PSA for men and colonoscopy for people in their 50's). Additional tests may be needed depending on your medical history and what the doctor finds when he examines you. Keep in touch with your coordinator while you are doing your testing or if someone offers to be your living donor. If you do, your results can be obtained quickly for the team to review. If you are very healthy and your records are complete and up to date, the team may be able to list you without unnecessary delays.

### 5. Get listed

You can be listed if and when:

- Your tests are **done**.
- The transplant team **received and reviewed** them and the **results are acceptable**.
- You are **compliant** with your diet, medications and dialysis treatments.
- The transplant team decides you are an **acceptable** candidate and places your name on the UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing) national waiting list. This means they think you are healthy enough to receive a kidney and will be able to care for your new kidney properly by complying with anti-rejection medicines and checkups at the transplant clinic after you get transplanted.

The transplant center is **required** to send you a letter informing you of your status when you are listed and when your status changes for any reason. For example, during a hospitalization, insurance problem or if you are not complying with your dialysis treatments. During such times the transplant center may make you inactive on the list until the situation is resolved.

The wait for a kidney from a deceased donor can be long - about 5 years or longer- and depends on many things.

Your health may change during your wait and the transplant center needs to make sure you are healthy enough to receive a kidney transplant at any time during your wait. Don't drop the ball during this period! Get to and maintain a healthy weight. Stop smoking. Ask your doctor about his or her recommendations for exercise. Eat a healthy diet. Comply with your diet, medications and dialysis treatments. Get vaccinated for pneumonia, flu and hepatitis B. Above all, keep in touch with your transplant coordinator and let him or her know about any changes in your health or contact information when they happen. Be sure to show up for your re-evaluation appointments and update your tests when you are told!

### What Does Medicare Pay for a Kidney Transplant?

To be covered by Medicare, your kidney transplant must be done in a hospital that is approved by Medicare to do kidney transplants. Medicare will pay under **Part A** for in-patient services required for your transplant (after your deductible), the kidney registry fee, laboratory and other tests needed to evaluate your medical condition (and that of your potential donor if you have a living donor transplant), the cost of care for a kidney donor and blood transfusions (unless the hospital has to pay for the blood in which case you are responsible to replace or pay for the first 3 pints).

**Part B** will pay 80% (after your deductible) of the doctor's services for kidney transplant care (before, during and after), the doctor's services for a living kidney donor and the immunosuppressive drugs for a recipient for three years after discharge following transplant.

For more information please visit:

[www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/10128.pdf](http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/10128.pdf)

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/kidneytransplantation.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/kidneytransplantation.html)

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003005.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003005.htm)

**JOIN THE PAC TODAY!**



The Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) for QIRN3 consists of dialysis patients and those who have received transplants. The committee meets quarterly to discuss issues relevant to ESRD patients. The PAC members have a genuine concern for quality of care issues and encourage patients to be involved in their healthcare. They are willing to share skills and experience with others.

Call toll free 1-888-877-8400 to join the PAC.

**How to Contact QIRN3**  
 Cranbury Gates Office Park  
 109 South Main Street, Suite 21  
 Cranbury, NJ 08512  
 Phone: 888-877-8400 (toll-free)  
 Fax: 609-490-0835  
 Email: [qirn3@nw3.esrd.net](mailto:qirn3@nw3.esrd.net)

We're on the  
 Web!  
[www.qirn3.org](http://www.qirn3.org)