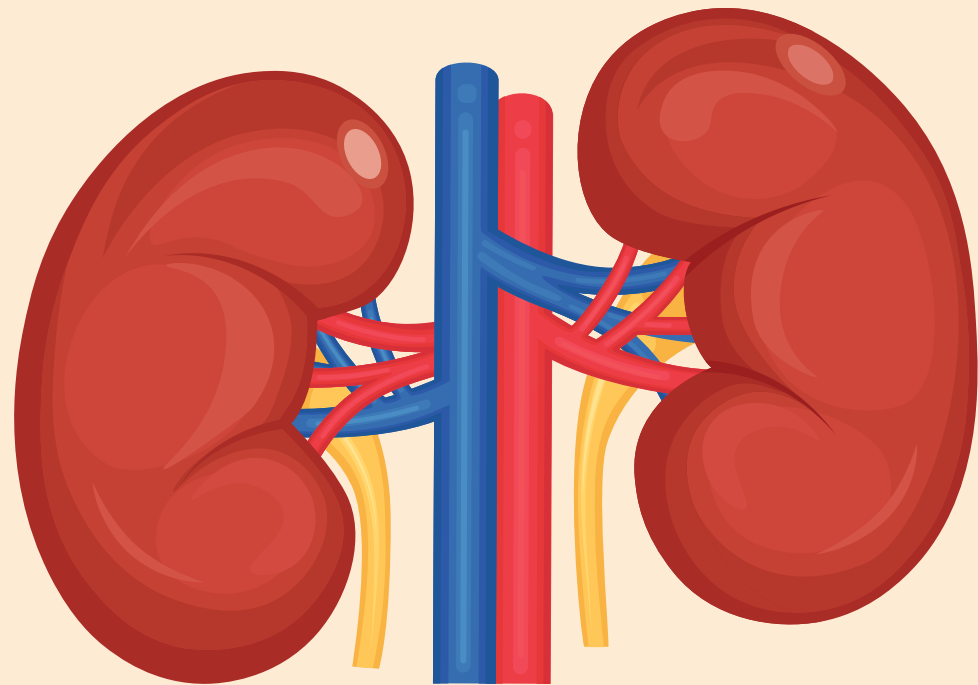


HAVING A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

A kidney transplant is when a healthy kidney from one person is transplanted into an individual whose kidneys are not working very well.



A successful kidney transplant is often the management goal for many young people with kidney disease whose kidneys are failing. Individuals on dialysis will no longer need dialysis once they have had a transplant. The transplanted kidney is matched to the individual patient in terms of blood group and tissue type.

TRANSPLANTED KIDNEYS CAN COME FROM THREE SOURCES:



Living related transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from a blood relative.



Living unrelated transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from a person who is not a blood relative but has been found to be a good match in terms of blood group and tissue type



Cadaveric transplants

This term means to receive a kidney from someone who has died and who has chosen to donate their kidneys.

Having a kidney transplant depends on matching the right kidney with the right patient at the right time.

THE TRANSPLANT TEAM

A specialist medical team will look after patients who are due to have a transplant. This team includes a transplant nurse, a transplant surgeon and the paediatric nephrologist.

PLEASE SPEAK TO YOUR MEDICAL TEAM IF YOU HAVE ANY WORRIES OR QUESTIONS ABOUT KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS.



THE OPERATION

When having a kidney transplant operation, the surgeon will put the patient to sleep with a medicine called an anaesthetic, so the patient won't feel or see anything while they operate. The operation will take approximately 2-4 hours. A healthy kidney will be taken from one person (the donor) and placed into the body of the person who needs it (the recipient). The patient's kidneys will usually be left in place and the transplanted kidney is placed in the abdomen, just above the groin. The new kidney will have its own blood supply to ensure it works well.

AFTER THE OPERATION

The medical team will keep a close eye on the patient after the transplant operation. They will monitor blood pressure, fluid intake and urine output (i.e. how much wee is produced). Blood tests will also be taken so that the doctors can monitor how well the new kidney is functioning. The patient may have to stay in hospital for about 2 weeks after the operation so that the doctors can be sure that the new kidney is working well before going home.

All patients who have a kidney transplant will need to take medications called immunosuppressants. These medications dampen down the patient's immune system to stop the body from rejecting or fighting against the new kidney, as the body may recognise the new kidney as not being 'its own'.

After a transplant, there may be fewer dietary restrictions than before, and it is important to follow a healthy diet. Please see the section on 'healthy eating after a kidney transplant' in this newsletter for more information.



WHAT IF THE TRANSPLANT IS NOT SUCCESSFUL?

There is a risk that an individual's body may 'reject' the new kidney. It is important for patients to take their immunosuppression medication carefully to try to avoid this from happening. If a transplant fails, a patient will usually need to have dialysis.

A kidney transplant does not cure kidney failure, however, a successfully transplanted kidney can mean that an individual will feel better, can stop dialysis if they were on it, and have a healthy, varied diet. A new kidney may work for many years; however, some children may need further kidney transplants in the future.



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