



## KIDNEY TRANSPLANT INFORMATION

### Pre-Transplant

#### Frequently asked questions

- **How do I get a referral to the Transplant Institute?**  
Your primary care physician will contact the Transplant Institute with your referral. You should also call our transplant coordinator at 412-359-5017 to provide authorization for us to obtain your medical records.
- **Does the Transplant Institute accept my insurance or Medicare for a transplant?**  
We are a Medicare-approved hospital and accept many different insurance plans. Our financial coordinators will confirm your insurance coverage before or during your initial evaluation. Contact one of our coordinators at 412-359-5250.
- **Why do I need a phone interview?** After we receive your referral, we will set up a phone interview to review your medical and social history, including prior testing or hospitalizations. We will then schedule an evaluation appointment where you will meet our multidisciplinary team.
- **What happens at the transplant evaluation visit?**  
You will meet with our pre-transplant team: a transplant nephrologist, surgeon, social worker, financial coordinator, and a transplant coordinator. You will then be given tests to assess your health, including blood work, an electrocardiogram (EKG), a chest X-ray, a renal ultrasound, and urine studies. You will be given prescriptions to complete further studies based on your gender and your past medical and surgical history.
- **What happens following the visit?**  
After your screening and testing is complete, your case is presented to our transplant team. Your coordinator will notify you of the team's recommendation for your best course of treatment. If you are a candidate for a transplant, you will be placed on the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) waiting list until a donor is found.
- **What should I do if I know someone interested in being a living donor?**  
Once you are deemed a candidate for transplant and are placed on the UNOS waiting list, please have anyone interested in kidney donation contact our donor coordinator at 412-359-4441. During that phone call, we will begin the donor's testing process and schedule an evaluation appointment with our Living Donor Program team. The donor will complete very similar medical testing as any candidate awaiting transplant. Once donor candidacy is determined, we will schedule a transplant date for you.
- **What happens while I'm waiting for an organ to become available?**  
You will remain on the UNOS waiting list until an organ becomes available. Should your demographics or physical health status change, please contact our waiting list coordinator at 412-359-5074.
- **How will I know when an organ becomes available?**  
No matter what time of day or night a donor organ becomes available, our coordinator will notify you immediately. It is imperative that you are available by cell phone during the time you are on the waiting list.



## Preparing for transplant Frequently asked questions

- **What should I do before I go to the hospital for the transplant?**  
You should pack necessities for a three- to five-night stay at the hospital. However, keep your suitcase in your car or in a place that is easily accessible so that someone can retrieve it after your surgery when you are settled into a hospital room.
- **What should I pack and not pack?**  
Pack a toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, undergarments, change of clothes, socks and slippers. Please leave any valuables at home.
- **How do I get to the Transplant Institute?**  
Allegheny General Hospital  
320 East North Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212  
Transplant Institute phone: 412-359-5017  
The Institute is located in the Liver Cancer Center, 4th Floor
- **Where should I park?**  
If possible, you should have someone drive you to the hospital. That person should park in the hospital parking garage.
- **Where should I go to be admitted into the hospital?**  
If you are being admitted for transplant during normal business hours, you should go to the Allegheny General Hospital's Admissions Office on the first floor, across from the Singer Lab, near the Gift Shop. If you are being called in for transplant after business hours, you should report to the Allegheny General Hospital's Emergency Department.
- **What kind of hospital room will I have?**  
You will have a semi-private room. We provide private rooms to our transplant donors.
- **Will I have a television and telephone in my room?**  
All of our patients' rooms are equipped with televisions and telephones.
- **What hotels are near the Transplant Institute for my family and friends?**  
We have relationships with several hotels in the area that offer discounted rates and shuttle services to Allegheny General Hospital. Our social worker can supply you with an updated list of these hotels.
- **Do you provide special services for people with disabilities?**  
Yes, we provide a number of special services for hospitalized patients with disabilities. During the admission process, please let our transplant coordinator know of any special needs that you have.



## The transplant

### Frequently asked questions

- **What happens during the transplant process?**

When an organ becomes available, the transplant coordinator will call you and direct you to the appropriate location in the hospital. You will see each member of the multidisciplinary transplant team, who will collaborate to develop an individualized plan of care for you. Our case manager will assist you with discharge placement, if warranted, and prior authorization for medications. When the appropriate time comes, you will be taken to the operating room for the transplant.

- **How long does the surgery last?**

In most cases, if there are no complications, a transplant operation takes 2 to 4 hours to complete.

- **What happens to me after surgery?**

Typically, patients go directly to the recovery room until you are stable enough for transfer to the Transplant Unit, where you will remain for three to five days. You will undergo constant monitoring and testing to determine if your new kidney is being accepted by your body.

- **How long will I stay in the hospital?**

Your length of stay in the hospital is determined by your recovery. Typically, transplant patients remain in the hospital for 3 to 5 days and are then permitted to go home or to a nursing facility if warranted.

- **What are my days like while I'm in the hospital?**

During your recovery, you will see each member of our transplant team, including physicians, nurses, a social worker, and a case manager. If necessary, a physical and/or occupational therapist will evaluate you and provide you with appropriate care. You will get out of bed and move to a chair during your first day after surgery. You will be instructed to use your incentive spirometer to keep your lungs functioning normally. A nurse will assess your pain level to ensure you are kept comfortable. Your kidney function and lab work will be monitored on a daily basis.



## Post-transplant Frequently asked questions

- **What should I expect from my health when I get home?**

You will feel fatigued and possibly experience pain. You should take your pain medications as directed by your physician. Also, you should ensure that you have a support person available to help you every day for approximately six weeks. This person will help you with your normal daily activities including taking your medicine, driving, cooking, and running errands.
- **What changes will I have to make to my lifestyle?**

Our transplant coordinator will work closely with you and your family to teach you about lifestyle modifications, including exercise, diet, and prescription management. You will not be allowed to lift more than 10 pounds for eight weeks. You will not be permitted to drive for three to six weeks, or as long as you are taking pain medications. Any dietary restrictions will be determined by your kidney function at that time.
- **Will I need a special routine at home?**

Prior to your discharge from the hospital, your physicians, transplant coordinator, and discharge nurse will carefully explain your home care instructions. We will give you a medication schedule and teach you how to monitor your vital signs. Every day, you will need to record your blood pressure, temperature, pulse, weight, urine output, and fluid intake. You will need to visit your local hospital or laboratory facility two to three times a week for lab work, and clinic visits.
- **Should I have any concerns?**

Infection and rejection are the primary concerns for transplant patients. Your medications — which you will have to take for the life of your transplant — will include medications to prevent rejection. Preventing infection is also of the utmost importance for you, so we recommend exceptional hand washing and staying away from others who are sick, even with a common cold. We recommend that you wear a mask if you cannot avoid being around a person who is ill.
- **When can I return to work?**

You will be allowed to return to work when your transplant physicians determine you are able. The average time for patients to return to work is six weeks depending on your occupation.