

Overview of the kidney transplant process

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What will the recovery be like and how long does it take?

What happens after the transplant?

What are the 5 main steps of the kidney transplant process?

Your transplant journey with UCLA starts with an Education Seminar to help you learn what to expect as a transplant patient at UCLA. After your Education Seminar, there are several major milestones that you will encounter.

STEP 1 Evaluation

Transplant evaluation can take a few months to a year, depending on your current health and how quickly you are able to schedule all the necessary tests. At your evaluation, you will be seen by various specialists who will make sure that your health and finances are stable enough for you to undergo transplant and be safe.

STEP 2 Waitlisting & multiple listing

Once you have passed evaluation and your doctors have decided that you are eligible for a transplant, you will be put on the national deceased donor waitlist. On average, people spend 5 – 7 years on the waitlist. Through multiple listing, you can register as a patient at more than one transplant center, which may increase your odds of receiving a transplant sooner. To remain ACTIVE on the waitlist, which means you are able to receive organ offers, make sure you keep your transplant team updated with any changes in your health or contact information.

STEP 3 Organ offers

There are different types of organ offers that you may receive if a deceased donor kidney becomes available. These will be covered in detail in a later handout. You may also be able to receive a living donor kidney transplant from a willing family member, friend, or even a complete stranger. You always have the option to decline an organ offer. Keep your contact information updated so your transplant center can easily contact you if a kidney becomes available.

STEP 4 Surgery

The full procedure, including wake up time from anesthesia, takes 4 – 8 hours. During the surgery, doctors will make a cut in your belly, place the donated kidney into your body, and connect it to your bladder. If you are receiving a living donor kidney transplant, your donor may be scheduled for surgery around the same time.

STEP 5 Recovery process

After your surgery, you will stay at the hospital for about a week. During this time, your care team will teach you how to take care of your new kidney and explain how your caregiver will help you at home. You'll likely be able to return to your normal activities within one month post-transplant. Getting a transplant is not a cure for kidney disease, however. For the rest of your life, you will need to monitor your kidney function carefully, regularly visit your doctor for checkups, and always take your meds.

What happens during the surgery?

The surgery takes about 4-5 hours. The entire process from waiting before surgery to waking up in the recovery room takes 4-8 hours.

During the surgery:

1. You will be under general anesthesia, which will put you to sleep and prevent you from feeling pain.
2. A machine will help you breathe.
3. Doctors make a cut in your belly.
4. They place the donated kidney into your body through this cut (doctors won't take out the failed kidneys most of the time).
5. They connect your new kidney to your bladder.
6. The new kidney starts making pee, often during the surgery or soon after.
7. A tube will help drain pee from your bladder for a few days after surgery.

5 steps to a kidney transplant



Step 1:
Evaluation



Step 2:
Waitlisting/
multiple
listing



Step 3:
Organ
offers



Step 4:
Surgery



Step 5:
Recovery
process

What will the recovery be like and how long does it take?

You'll stay in the hospital for a few days to a week. After leaving the hospital, you'll return to the clinic about 2-3 times a week while your body heals. Over time, you'll start to feel better and be able to do more. You'll likely be able to return to your normal activities within a month after your transplant.

Your transplant team will explain everything that you and your caregiver will need to do before you leave the hospital. Follow all of their directions for the best outcomes.

What happens after the transplant?

Getting a transplant is not a cure for kidney disease. After your transplant, you'll need to:

- Visit your doctors regularly.
- Continue taking some of the meds you took before the transplant.
- Take new meds to prevent your new kidney from failing and to prevent infection for however long the kidney lasts.
- Have your kidney function and blood pressure checked regularly.

