

MYTHS IN KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

Sharing Facts for Those Considering Kidney Transplantation

A new or changing diagnosis of kidney disease can feel intimidating or isolating. You're not alone! Many others share the same concerns, feelings, and questions that you do. The internet is full of opinions; National Kidney Foundation of Wisconsin is here to help you sort out the facts.

Myth	Fact
I will need to continue my pre-transplant dietary restrictions post-transplant.	Consult your healthcare team or renal dietitian about how your diet should change after transplant. Some recipients have few or no dietary restrictions.
Only young people can get a kidney transplant.	All patients who are found to be physically and emotionally prepared for transplant are eligible to get a kidney.
Hospitals let people die so they can take their organs to give to people on the waitlist.	When you go to the hospital for treatment, the number one concern is saving your life, not someone else's. Hospitals have detailed policies and procedures in place to determine when and how deceased organ donations can occur once lifesaving measures fail.
I've been on dialysis too long to be a transplant candidate.	The length of time on dialysis is not a factor for transplant eligibility. In fact, your time on dialysis counts towards your seniority on the transplant waiting list.
You can "pay your way" to the top of the transplant waitlist or receive priority because you're rich.	Being rich or famous does not increase your chances or lessen your waiting time. Strict standards and policies are outlined and followed to ensure that all transplant candidates are treated equitably.
Receiving a transplant will result in a big, ugly scar that is impossible to hide.	In early kidney transplantations, incisions were often large and left visible scars. However, methods have come a long way in recent years. Incisions (and scars) are as small as possible and easy to hide.
I don't need a support plan or support person. I can do it all myself.	Transplant centers require an identified support person before you are eligible to receive a transplant. This is because transplant can affect you in unexpected ways emotionally, physically, or mentally. Particularly in the first weeks, you will need help with daily activities and transportation.
If I have a transplant, I won't be able to get pregnant or have children.	Pregnancy and children are still possible post-transplant! However, you should wait to get pregnant until you've been medically cleared by your healthcare team.

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A kidney transplant cures your kidney disease.	Transplant is a treatment, not a cure. You will need to follow a care plan including anti-rejection medicine, routine monitoring, and a healthy lifestyle after your transplant.
I won't be able to exercise or participate in my favorite sports post-transplant.	You can have an active lifestyle as long as your body is responding well and your doctor confirms that it is safe for you to be active. Like any exercise routine, start slowly and don't overdo it.
Insurance will cover all costs associated with transplant.	Insurance coverage is based on your individual plan and a variety of factors. Your transplant center has staff to check your coverage and explain any costs you might face. Ask questions and be sure you understand what you are responsible for. There may be patient programs available to help with costs. Be sure to discuss any financial concerns with your team.
I can only get on the transplant waitlist for one transplant center at a time.	You can be evaluated and approved at multiple centers to increase your odds of getting a kidney faster. Know that each center may have a different evaluation or approval process.
If my transplanted kidney fails or wears out, I can't receive another transplant.	You can receive multiple kidney transplants over your lifetime, if you are healthy enough to do so. You will need to go through the evaluation and approval process each time.

If your question hasn't been answered here, or the list sparks new questions, reach out to our national patient helpline at (855) 653-2273 or contact National Kidney Foundation of Wisconsin to learn more about local programs at (414) 897-8669 or info@kidneywi.org.

Additional Resources

National Kidney Foundation		Local Programs and Events
Patient Support Line 855.NKF.CARES (855.653.2273)	Transplant Resources www.kidney.org/transplantation	National Kidney Foundation of WI 414.897.8669 or info@kidneywi.org

LIVING DONATION MYTHS

The Truth About Living Kidney Donation

The truth is that you only need one healthy kidney to live a healthy normal life, but common myths and misconceptions make it harder for interested donors to give the gift of life. These are some of the common myths we hear at National Kidney Foundation of Wisconsin. If you have others, we would love to hear about them.

Myth	Fact
Living donation is too expensive for the donor.	<p>The medical costs are typically covered by the recipient's insurance. Your transplant center may also participate in DonorShield or similar programs which offset lost wages, travel costs, and other non-medical expenses.</p> <p>Wisconsin also has a state tax credit available for living donors of up to \$10,000.</p>
Once the donation process has begun, I cannot change my mind about donating.	A donor can change their mind about organ donation at any time up until the surgery begins.
If a person does not offer to donate, that must mean they aren't interested in donating.	Many people don't know that living kidney donation is an option.
A donor will have trouble getting health insurance/life insurance after they donate.	There are protections in place to ensure donors have appropriate access to care.
Living kidney donors can't live a healthy life with just one kidney.	<p>A person only needs one kidney to lead a healthy normal life. Living donors are carefully screened to be sure they are healthy and can have a kidney removed safely.</p> <p>Like all people, living donors are encouraged to have regular checkups and follow a healthy lifestyle.</p>
Living kidney donors live a shorter life.	There is no evidence that kidney donation shortens your lifespan.
Living kidney donors are more likely to get kidney disease after donating.	Donors are counseled about their individual risk associated with donation. They will not be approved to donate if there is reason to believe they will need a kidney transplant in future.
Adults over age 50 can't donate.	Many people have become living donors in their 60s or even older. Each potential donor is evaluated based on their health and individual risk factors. Personal health matters much more than age.

LIVING DONATION MYTHS

The Truth About Living Kidney Donation

Myth	Fact
Gay (homosexual) people and those with tattoos can't be living kidney donors.	All donors are screened for medical and infectious diseases and are only cleared if it is safe for both the donor and recipient. Other factors like the donor's appearance or sexual orientation do not matter in the donation process.
A kidney donor can no longer participate in sports or exercise.	A donor can typically return to regular activities and exercise about 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.
Kidney donors will have to take medicine for the rest of their lives.	Generally, medicine for pain and stool softeners will be necessary only in the first few weeks after your donation surgery.
A kidney donor will have debilitating pain for an extended period of time.	Ordinarily, there will be some pain after surgery, which will diminish and can be controlled with pain medicine.
A kidney donor will be on bedrest following surgery.	A kidney donor will be out of bed and walking before leaving the hospital.
A kidney donor will be in the hospital for an extended period of time after surgery.	Typically, a kidney donor will be in the hospital for about 2 nights.
A donor will have to follow a new diet plan following donation.	A donor should eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, but there are no dietary restrictions.
A donor can no longer consume alcohol following donation.	While excessive alcohol use is always dangerous, a kidney donor can consume alcohol in moderation.
Living donors should not get pregnant after donation.	Many living donors have had successful pregnancies. It is a good idea to discuss this with your transplant team in advance and wait to become pregnant until you are medically cleared to do so.
A donor's sex life will be negatively affected by donation.	Donors may engage in sexual activity when they feel well enough to do so.

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