



# Network Consumer News

## The Journey of Transplant Evaluation

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Getting evaluated for a kidney transplant is not simple. It involves a lot of steps and lots of hard work!

First, let your nephrologist know that you are interested in a kidney transplant. Your nephrologist will likely want to discuss the option and any medical issues. Your nephrologist will then refer you to a transplant program.

If your nephrologist has concerns about making the referral, make sure you get specific reasons.

According to federal rules, you have the right to be referred for a transplant evaluation. You also have the right to be referred to the transplant program of your choice.

When considering a transplant program, keep in mind several things:

- Do you have family or friends in the area for support?
- Is it easier to get to one transplant hospital than another?
- Does your insurance require a specific transplant program?

### Transplant Evaluation Begins

Though each transplant program has a slightly different process, most transplant programs will set up an appointment with you to start the evaluation process if it is determined that you have insurance coverage for their program.

At the appointment, you will meet the transplant team. The transplant team typically includes:

- a transplant nephrologist or surgeon
- a transplant nurse coordinator
- a social worker, and
- a dietitian.

The team will review your medical records, complete a medical history and physical exam, explain the transplant process, and answer any



### LEARNING POINT

**Your Rights** – You have the right to be referred for a transplant evaluation.

### RELATED WEB RESOURCES

American Association of  
Kidney Patient  
[www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org)

National Kidney Foundation  
[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

United Network for  
Organ Sharing  
[www.transplantliving.org](http://www.transplantliving.org)

Northwest Renal Network  
4702 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW  
Seattle, WA 98116  
206.923.0714  
Fax 206.923.0716

Patient  
Toll-Free Number  
1.800.262.1514

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questions. The team will also want to know about your personal and family situation in order to make sure you have the necessary support, assistance, and resources in place to have success with the transplant.

Based on your medical history and situation, the team will decide what medical tests you will need to complete.

Some transplant programs will arrange for you to have the tests done over the course of a few days at a hospital. Other programs will expect you and your nephrologist to arrange for the tests to be done in the community. Depending upon the test

### YOU HAVE OPTIONS

It is important to know that each transplant program has its own evaluation guidelines.

Therefore, if one transplant program does not accept you for a kidney transplant and you disagree with the decision, you may want to consider applying to another transplant program.

If you are on dialysis, the dialysis unit is required to be able to provide to you a list of transplant programs and their evaluation guidelines (also known as transplant criteria).

For a list of transplant programs, you may also contact the Network at

**1.800.262.1514**

or

Visit our website

[www.nwrenalnetwork.org](http://www.nwrenalnetwork.org)



results, you may be requested to go for additional testing.

Transplant programs are very busy. It is recommended that you keep in frequent contact with the transplant office to make sure all test results are received and to find out whether further testing is needed.

Once you have completed all the required testing, the transplant team will notify you of their decision in writing. If you are not approved, the transplant center should provide you with specific reasons.

In some cases, the transplant center may encourage you to be evaluated again in the future once you have addressed some health problems.

### Now what happens?

If approved, your name can be put on the waiting list for a deceased donor kidney. While you are on the list, you may need to repeat certain tests every year to keep your medical information current.

It is also critical that you keep the transplant program updated on changes to your personal situation, insurance, or health.

If you are on dialysis, federal rules require your dialysis unit and transplant program to share information about your health and other issues related to your transplant status.

If you have someone who wants to donate a kidney to you, the donor has to go through a similar process of meeting with the team and completing a series of tests. The donor's testing cannot start until you are first approved.

Once a living donor is approved, the transplant program will schedule the transplant surgery.

### How long does it all take?

That depends on how many tests you (and a donor, if you have one) need to complete and how fast you get them done. Even if everything goes smoothly and you have a healthy donor, it may still take several months to coordinate everything.