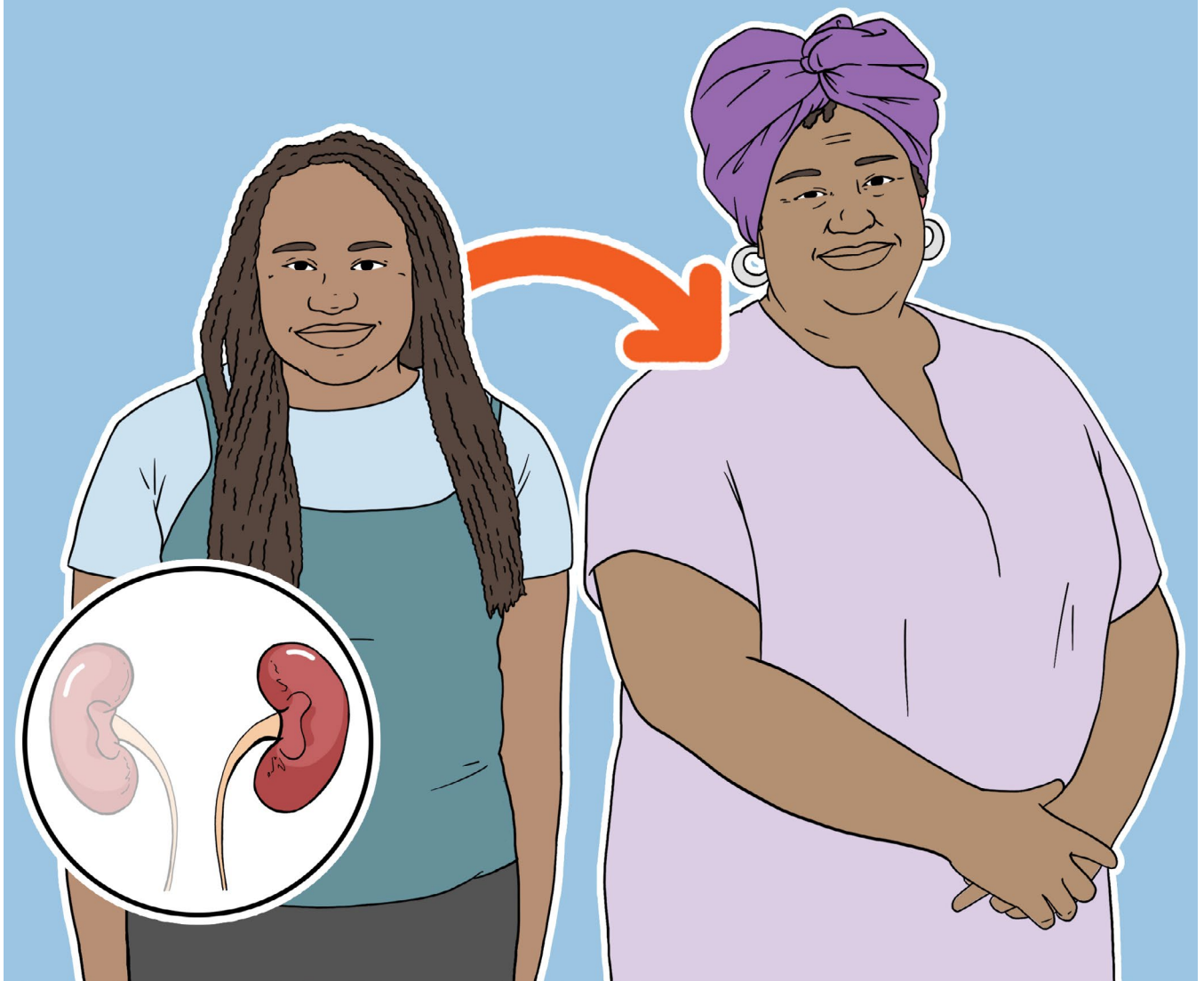


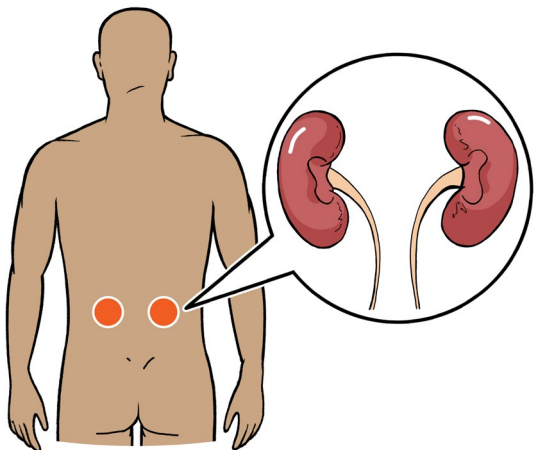
# Receiving a kidney

## Kidney transplantation



Easy read

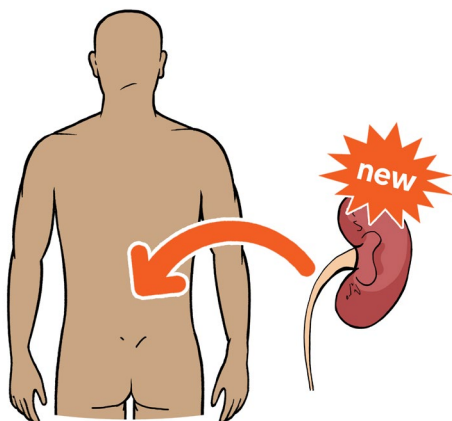
# What is a kidney transplant?



Your **kidneys** are organs in your body that clean your blood.



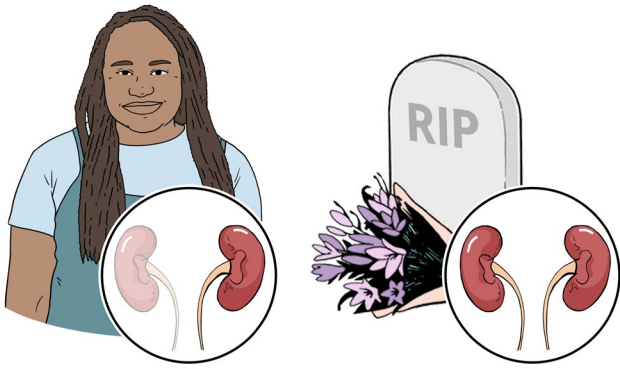
A **kidney transplant** is a treatment for kidney failure. This is when your kidneys stop working properly.



A **kidney transplant** is an **operation** where doctors put a healthy kidney from someone else into a person with kidney failure. Someone who gives one of their kidneys to someone else is called a donor.

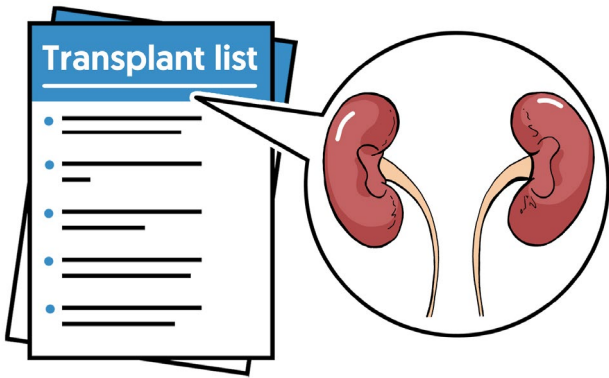


An **operation** is when doctors remove, replace, or fix something inside your body.

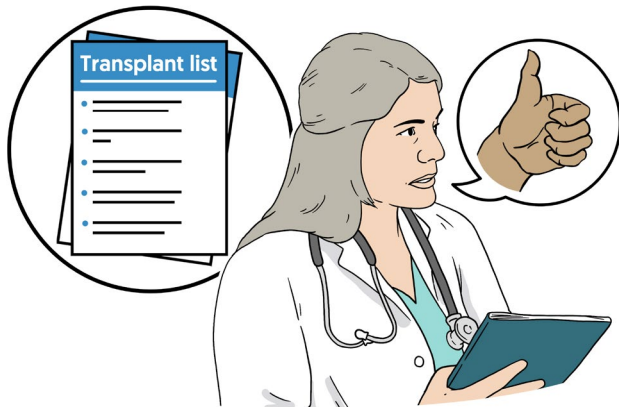


When you have a kidney transplant, the kidney can come from a living donor or a donor who has died.

## What is the transplant list?



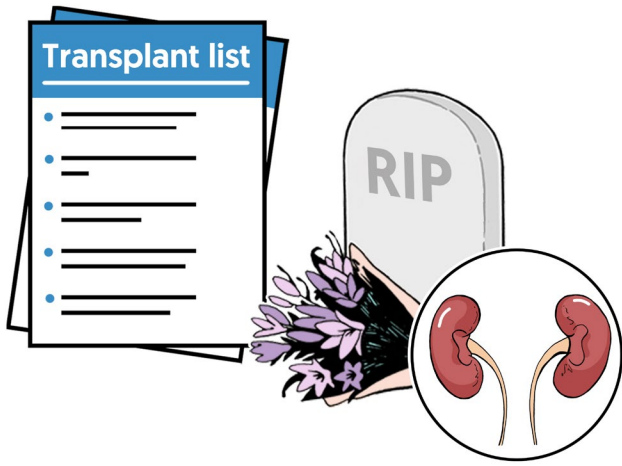
The **transplant list** is a waiting list for people who need a new organ, like a kidney.



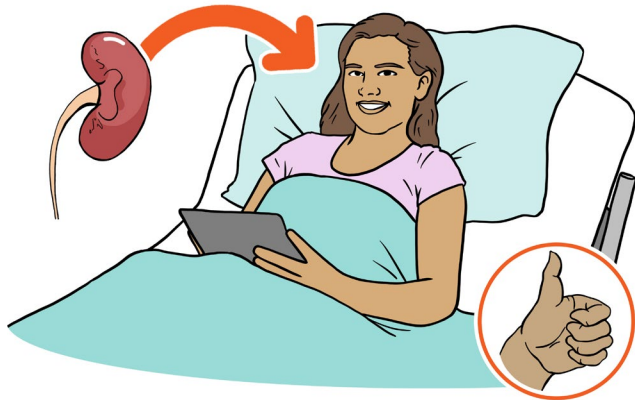
You will be put on the transplant list if your **kidney team** think it is a good treatment for you.



Your **kidney team** are the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals who treat you for your kidney problems.



People on this list are waiting for a kidney from a donor who has died.

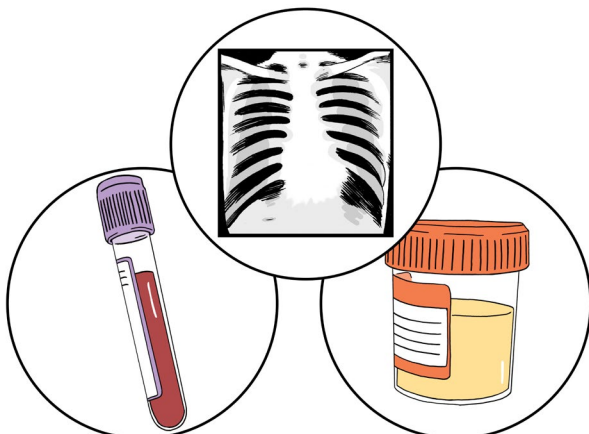


Kidneys are not given to the person at the top of the list. They are given to the person who will have the best chance of the transplant going well. This is called the **best match**.

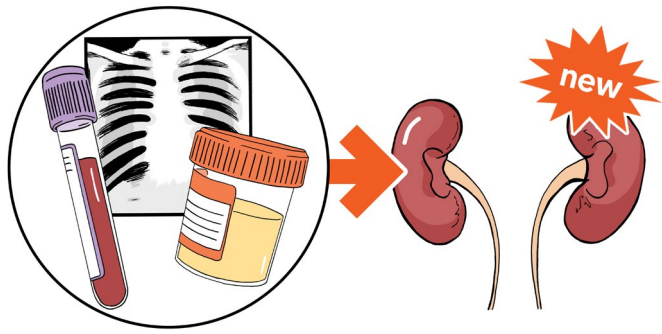
## Getting on the transplant list



Not everyone can have a kidney transplant. Your body needs to be healthy enough to have an operation and to get better after.



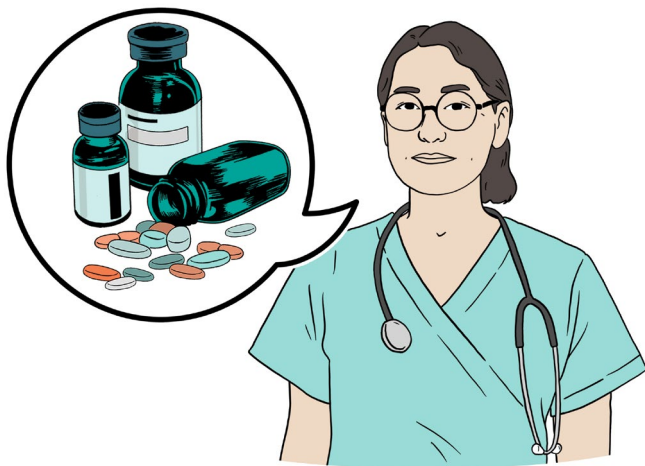
You will have different tests to check your body is healthy enough for a transplant. These are called a **work up**.



The work up tests can also help to match you to a donor.



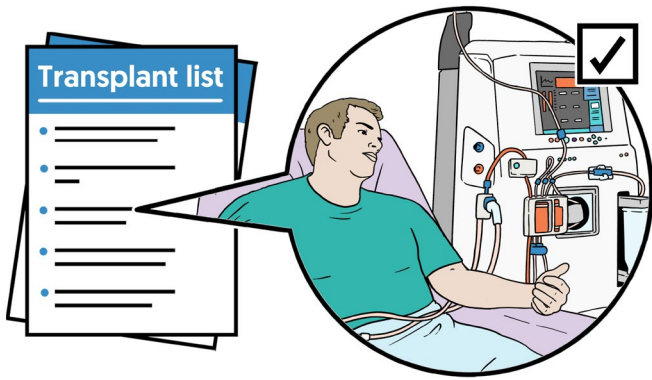
Your kidney team will tell you if the tests show it is not safe for you to have a kidney transplant.



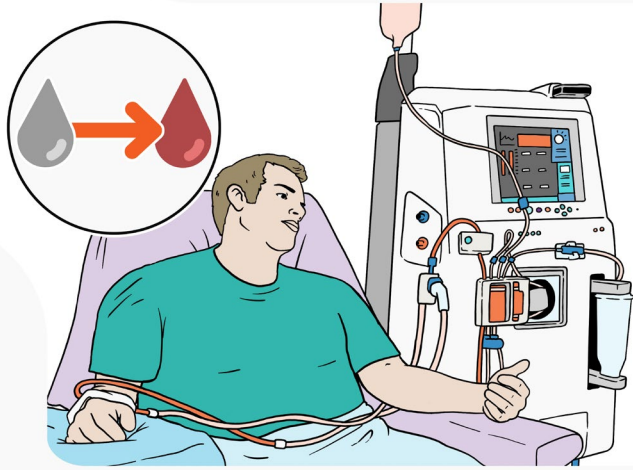
They will tell you about other treatments that you can have if you can not have a kidney transplant.



Having a transplant can bring up a lot of feelings. Your kidney team will check to see if a transplant is right for you.

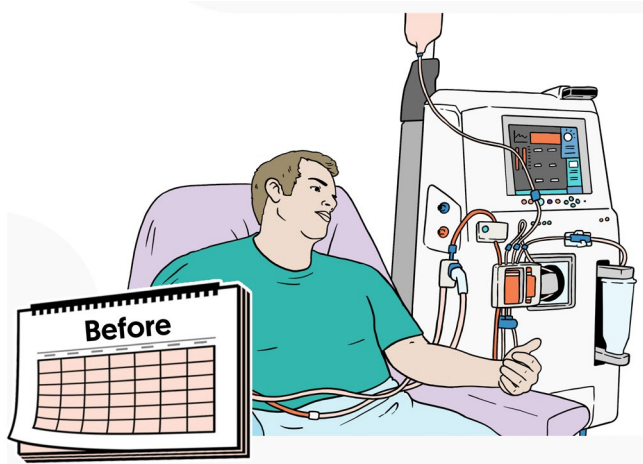


You can only join the transplant list if you are having **dialysis** treatment or you will need to start dialysis in less than a year.

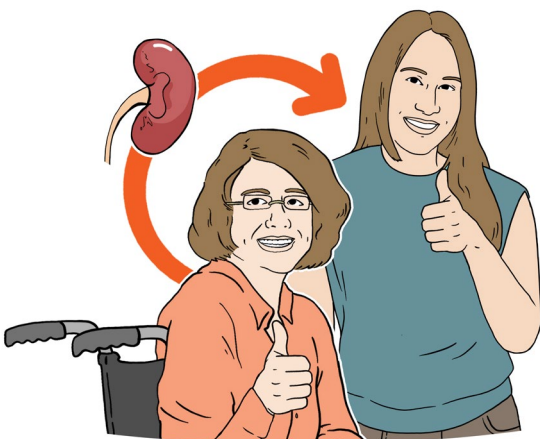


**Dialysis** is a treatment that uses a machine or equipment to clean a person's blood. This is what kidneys do on their own if they are healthy.

## Do I have to be on dialysis before a transplant?



You may be able to have a kidney transplant before you need to have dialysis treatment. This is called a **pre-emptive transplant**.

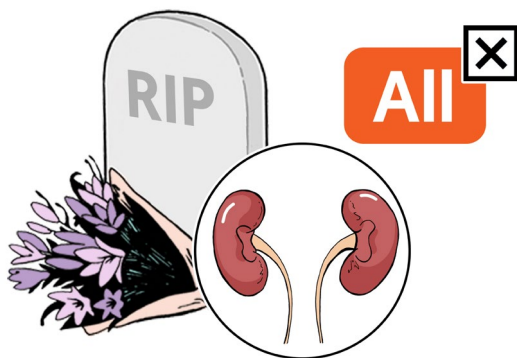


This is more likely to be possible if you have a friend or family member who will donate a kidney to you.

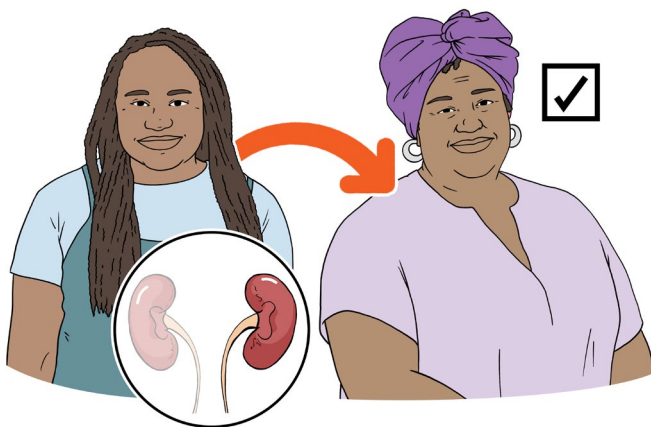


This way the operation can be planned before you join the list.

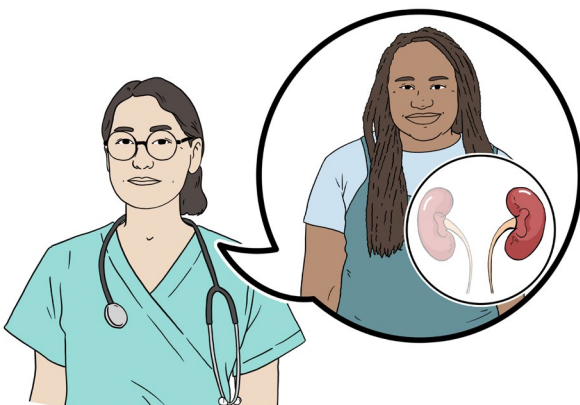
## Living donation



Not all transplants are from donors who have died.

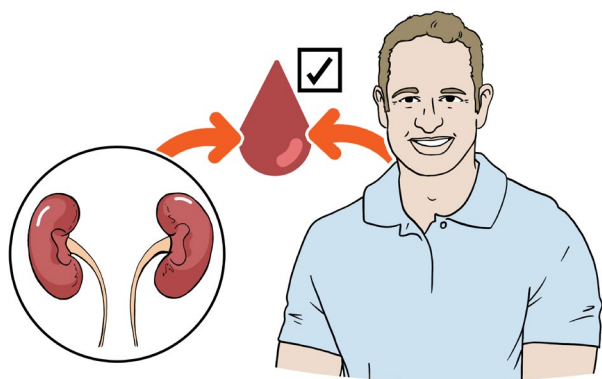


You may also be able to get a transplant from a friend or family member. This is called a **living donation**.



Your kidney team can talk to you and your family about living donation.

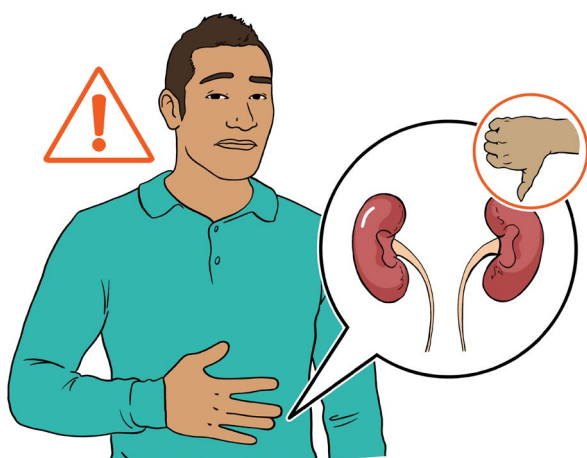
## Matching a donor



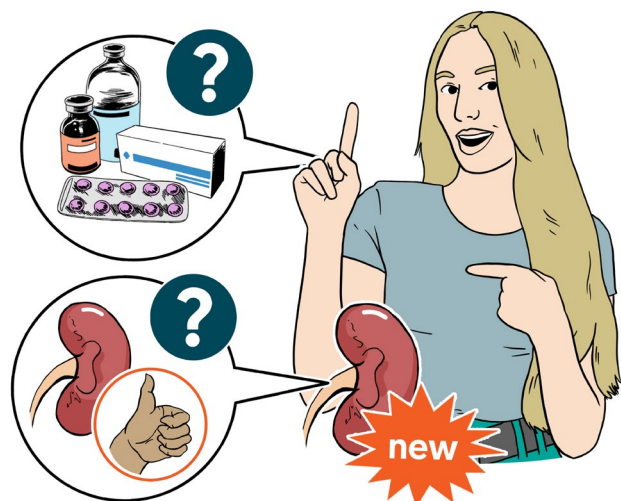
It is best if the kidney donor and the person getting the kidney have the same blood type.



When a donor kidney is found, your blood will be tested to see if it is a match.



This is to lower the chance of your body **rejecting the kidney**. This is when your body attacks the new donor kidney because it thinks it does not belong there.



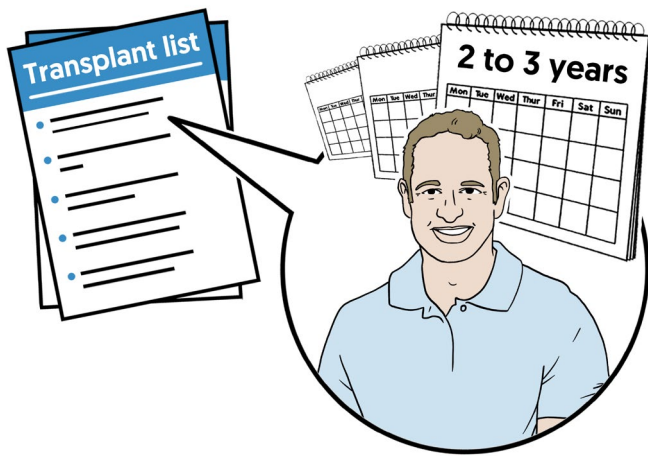
How well your transplant works depends on many things. For example, how good the new kidney is and if you have any other health problems.



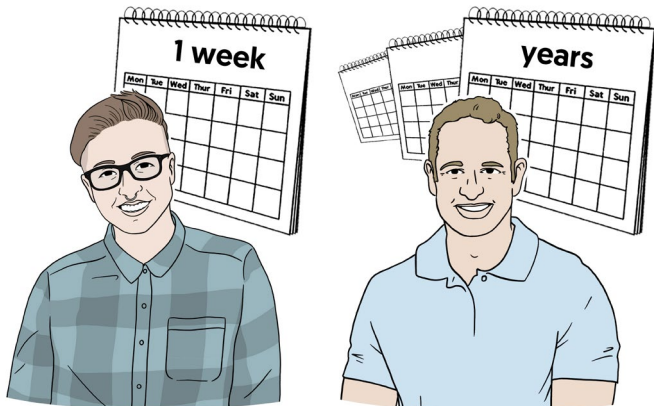


Taking your medication **as prescribed** is important. This means how the doctor has told you to take it. Talk to your pharmacist about this if you are unsure.

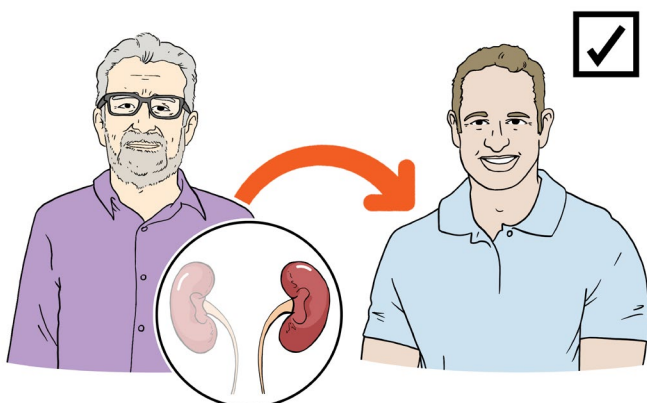
## How long will I have to wait for a transplant?



The average waiting time for a kidney transplant is 2 to 3 years.



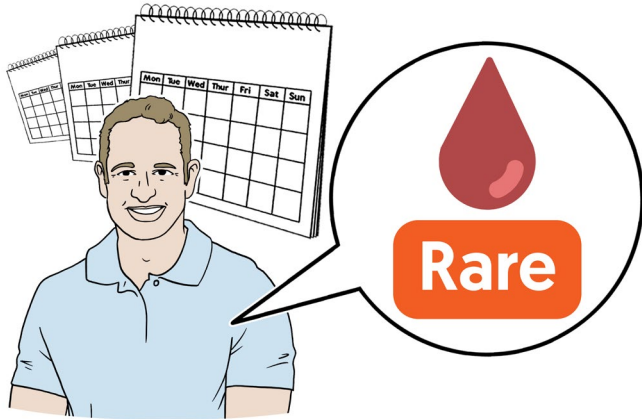
Some people get a transplant very quickly, but others may have to wait years.



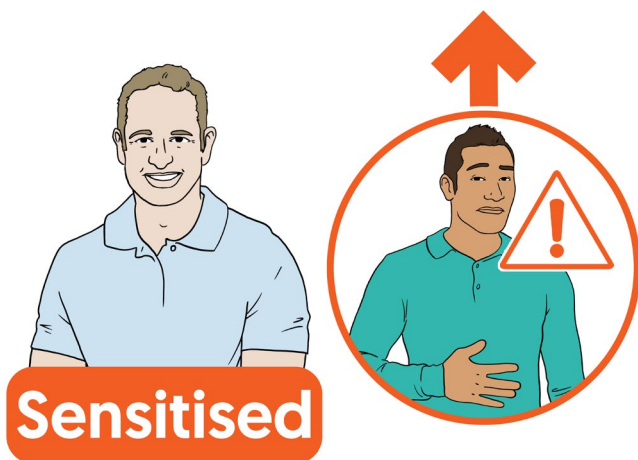
Donor matching is better when the donor and the person getting the kidney are the same ethnicity.



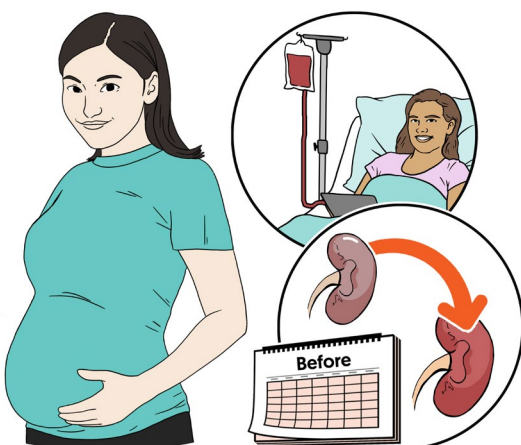
There are fewer Black and Asian donors. This means people who are Black or Asian often wait longer for a kidney transplant.



You may also have to wait longer if you have a rare blood type or if you are **sensitised**.



Being **sensitised** means there is more chance of your body rejecting your kidney if it is not a very close match.



Sensitisation happens in pregnancies, after having a blood transfusion, or if you have had a transplant before.

Sensitised

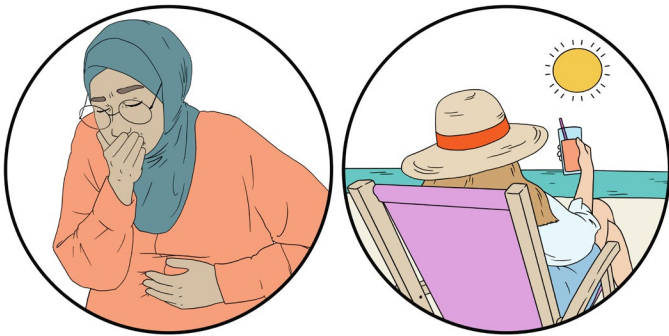


You will be tested to see how sensitised you are when you join the transplant list.

## What happens when I'm on the kidney transplant list?



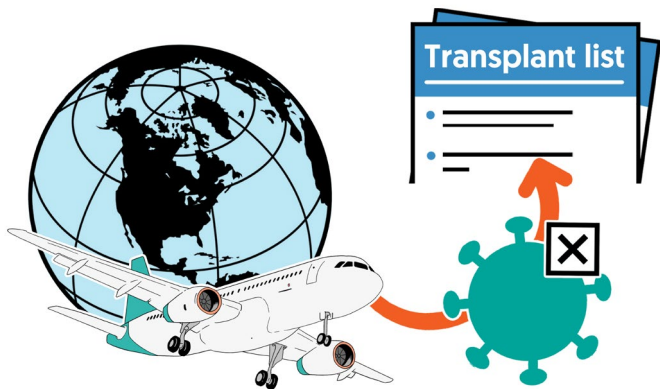
When you are on the transplant list you may get a phone call to come for a transplant at any time.



You may need to be **suspended** from the list if you are ill or go on holiday. Tell your kidney team if you are ill or going on holiday.

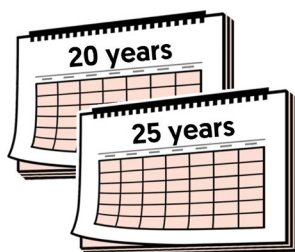
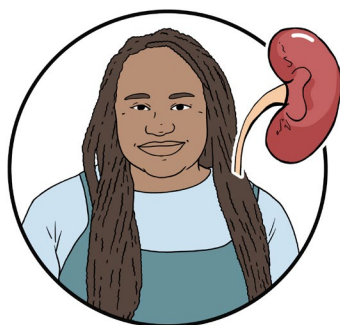


This means you would not be on the list for a short time and would not be checked for matches.

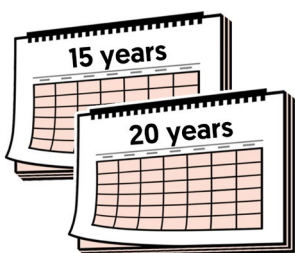


If you travel to some parts of the world, you will be suspended until tests show that you have not become infected with a virus such as HIV.

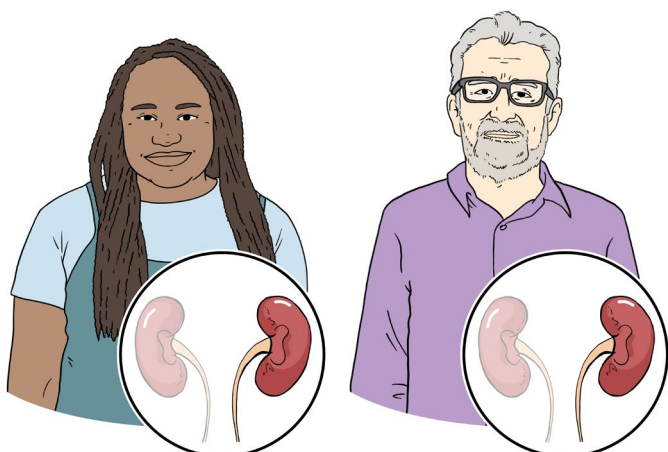
## How long will my new kidney last?



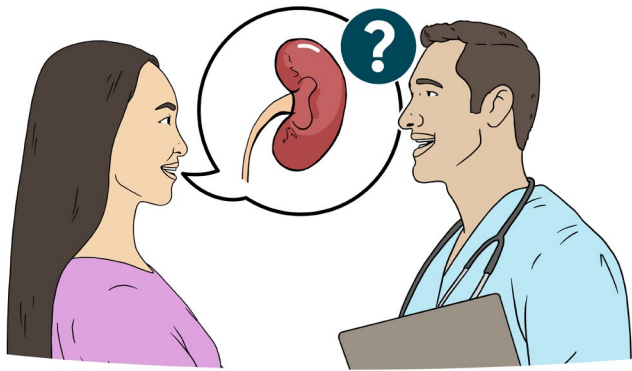
Kidney transplants from a living donor normally last about 20 to 25 years.



Kidney transplants from donors who have died normally last about 15 to 20 years.



The time a kidney lasts can be affected by your age and the age of the person who donated the kidney.



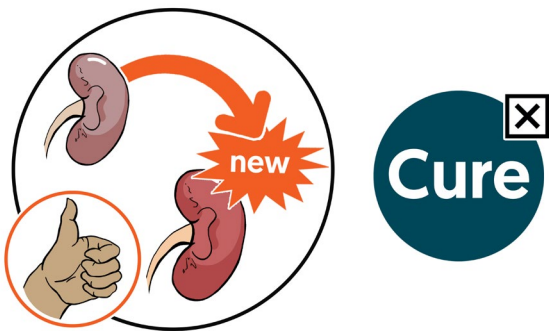
You can ask your kidney team about what may affect your own kidney transplant.



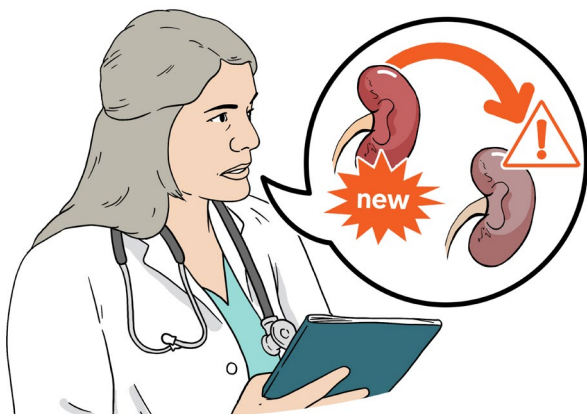
Around 1 in every 10 transplants is rejected within the first year. This means that the new kidney does not work in your body.



## Will a transplant cure my kidney disease?



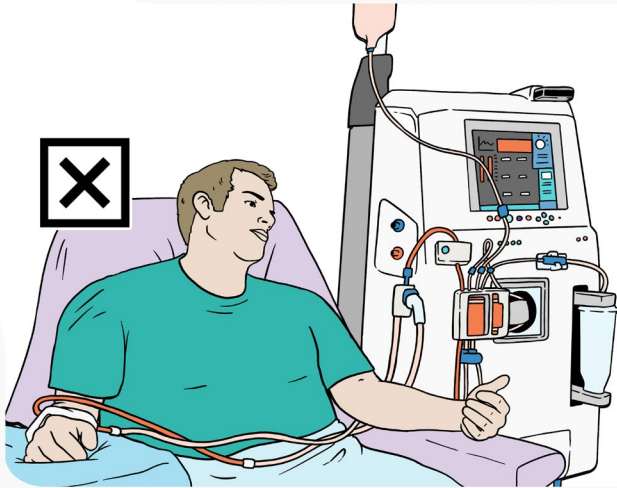
A transplant is a good treatment for kidney failure, but it does not cure the kidney disease.



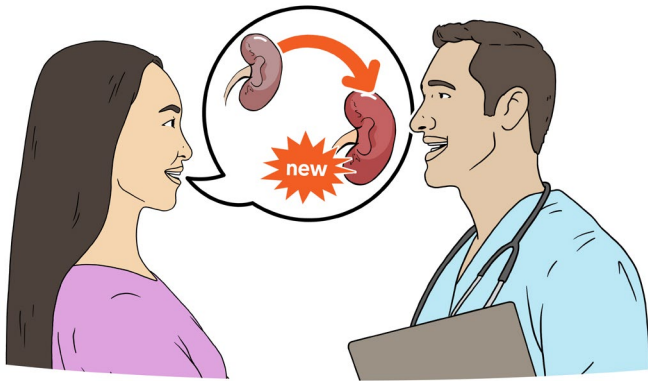
Some kidney diseases can happen again in the new kidney. Your kidney team will be able to talk with you about this.



A transplant should help improve your **quality of life**. Good **quality of life** is about being able to enjoy your life and to do things that help you to feel happy and well, like seeing friends or doing hobbies.

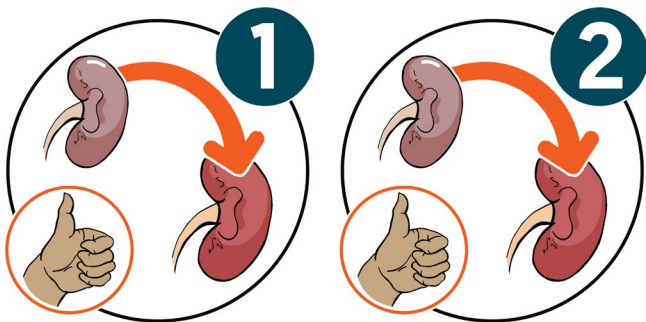


It should also mean there is less chance of you needing dialysis.

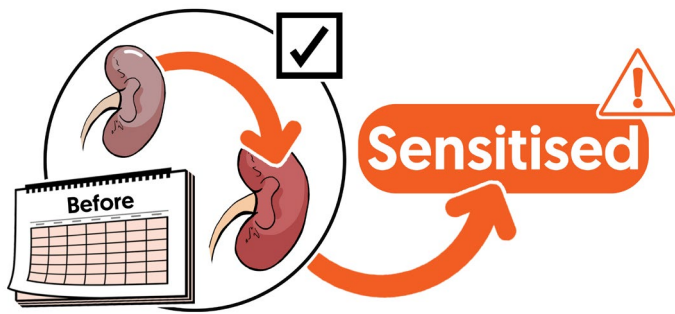


Talk to your kidney team about how a transplant may help you. This will help you to decide if it is the right treatment for you.

## Can I have more than one kidney transplant?



Yes. Some people have more than one kidney transplant in their life.



You may have to wait longer on the list after your first transplant. It will be harder to find a match because you may be more sensitised.



You will have the same tests as before to see if you are healthy enough for the transplant.

## More information



Kidney Care UK

[www.kidneycareuk.org/  
transplant](http://www.kidneycareuk.org/transplant)



NHS Blood and Transplant  
Organ Donation

[www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)

This easy read booklet uses simple language and pictures to tell you about kidney transplant. It has been made by Kidney Care UK, working with CHANGE.

CHANGE is a disability rights charity and accessible information expert.

Kidney Care UK is a support charity for kidney patients and their families. Contact us for advice and information on the free help that we offer.



Visit our website at: [kidneycareuk.org](https://kidneycareuk.org)



Email us at: [support@kidneycareuk.org](mailto:support@kidneycareuk.org)



Phone us at: **0808 801 00 00**



Images & Design © CHANGE

CHANGE

In partnership with



UK Kidney Association

Publication date 02/2025 Review date 02/2028

© Kidney Care UK. Kidney Care UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales (1228114). A charity registered in England and Wales (270288) and Scotland (SCO48198). KC72.