

## **Chronic Kidney Disease and Transplantation**

Chronic kidney disease that advances to a point of less than 15 percent renal capacity is known as end stage renal disease, or ESRD. ESRD is irreversible and life-threatening.

### **What happens if I have ESRD?**

The only treatment options available to you are dialysis or transplantation.

Approximately 400,000 Americans are on dialysis. The majority of these patients go to a dialysis center where a dialyzer serves as an artificial kidney, filtering wastes from their bloodstreams. This process is typically scheduled three times a week for three to four hours at each visit. While dialysis is life-saving, it presents lifestyle complications and unpleasant physical side effects for many people.

The optimal solution for kidney failure is transplantation. Kidney transplant is the most common transplant operation, accounting for more than 68 percent of all solid organ transplants worldwide, ahead of liver, heart, lung and pancreas.

### **How do I get a healthy kidney for transplant?**

A kidney for transplantation can come from a deceased or a living donor, such as a compatible family member or an anonymous donor. The best source for a transplant with the least probability of rejection is a relative with matching blood type and tissue. However, the transplant team will ensure that the closest possible match is made between donor and recipient to minimize rejection.

### **How is the new kidney transplanted?**

The new kidney is surgically placed in your abdomen, and its artery and vein are attached to the artery and vein in your pelvis. The ureter is attached to the bladder. The diseased kidney is left inside the body. Surgical techniques for donors and recipients are much less invasive than in the past, making the operation relatively safe.

### **Is there a chance the new kidney will not work?**

Yes, a slight chance. The most pressing concern after a transplant is rejection of the new kidney. You will take anti-rejection drugs that suppress the immune system for the rest of your life. Although complications can occur, it is usually a matter of switching to a different drug or adjusting the dosage.

A new kidney gives you an excellent chance of extending your life and enjoying a better quality of life.

Recent studies indicate that the typical ESRD patient will live 10-15 years longer with a kidney transplant versus dialysis. Transplant patients tend to have more energy, enjoy a less restricted diet and experience fewer health complications.

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### **Is a transplant expensive?**

Yes, but the cost-effectiveness of dialysis vs. transplant tips heavily in favor of transplant. Although a transplant is expensive (\$100,000 and up), the cost of long-term dialysis is even higher, estimated at more than \$50,000 a year per patient. (Insurance and/or Medicare cover much of the cost.) The Kidney Register estimates that Medicare's cost of maintaining a kidney transplant recipient is \$8,550 a year compared to \$50,938 for dialysis.

### **What should I do if I am interested in kidney transplantation?**

Talk with your Renal Specialists of Houston physician. We can help you consider all the pros and cons and determine if you are a good candidate for a transplant. If transplantation is right for you, we can help you start the process.