



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Kidney Transplant Glossary

Antibody – a substance that naturally forms in the blood stream to fight infections. They can also attack a transplanted kidney, causing the body to reject it.

Antigen – a substance, such as a transplanted kidney, that can trigger an immune response. That response may include the production of antibodies.

Candidate – person waiting for a kidney transplant.

Compliance – process of following the instructions of the transplant center, usually regarding the correct taking of medications.

Crossmatch – blood test that determines if a recipient's blood cells react against the potential donor's blood cells. It determines whether or not a patient can receive that particular donor's kidney. If the test is positive, meaning that the recipient has antibodies against the donor, the transplant may not be able to be performed.

Deceased donor – someone who has died and donated their organs for transplantation.

Deceased donor kidney – a kidney from a person who has been declared brain dead.

Donor – someone from whom a kidney is taken and used for transplantation into someone else's body.

Graft – a transplanted organ or tissue, in this case the kidney.

Immune system – the body's natural defense mechanism to fight what it detects as foreign substances. After a transplant, the body may detect the kidney as a foreign substance and the recipient's immune system will naturally want to defend itself by trying to reject the kidney.

Immunosuppressant – drug that helps the body accept a transplanted kidney by suppressing the immune system. These medications must be taken every day for as long as the transplant is functioning.

Living Donor Kidney – a kidney that is surgically removed from a healthy donor who is still living.

Noncompliance – failure of a patient to follow the instructions of the transplant team.

Pre-emptive transplant – transplant that is performed prior to the recipient having to start dialysis.

Recipient – the person receiving a transplanted kidney.

Recurrent disease – when the disease that caused the original kidneys to fail comes back and affects the transplanted kidney.

Rejection -- the body's way of trying to destroy a transplanted kidney, because it sees the kidney as a foreign substance. Usually happens in the first year after transplant, but can happen any time.

Side effect – an unplanned (but not necessarily unanticipated) reaction to a drug.

Stent– small tube placed inside the ureter after surgery to ensure the passage of urine from the transplant kidney into the bladder.

Tissue typing – a blood test to identify how closely the tissues of the donor match the tissues of the recipient.

United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) – national organization that makes sure all patients have a fair chance to receive a transplant. They match donors with recipients and manage the list of those people waiting for an organ transplant.

Ureter – tube that carries the urine from the kidney to the bladder.

