

Would Your Patient Benefit From a Kidney Transplant Referral?



Benefits of a Kidney Transplant

- Prolongs survival in many patients.
- Improves quality of life.
 - › Enjoy freedom from dialysis and reduced health problems related to years on dialysis.
 - › Experience fewer symptoms related to kidney failure.
- Healthcare cost savings of \$20 million over 5 years for every 100 transplants.

Types of Kidney Transplant

Kidneys for transplant come from a deceased donor through the provincial waitlist or a living donor.

- Patients wait years for a deceased donor kidney and are usually on dialysis while waiting. The average wait time from starting dialysis to receiving a deceased donor transplant in Ontario is 3 to 6 years depending on blood type and antibody levels.
- Patients can avoid dialysis and the long wait by receiving a living donor kidney transplant, often from a family member or friend.

Timing of the Referral

- If a patient is already receiving dialysis, consider referral now.
- For patients with failing kidneys not receiving dialysis.
 - › Refer any patient who is expected to require dialysis within the next year.
 - › Refer patients with **potential living kidney donors** if they meet any of these criteria:
 - › eGFR less than 15 mL/min per 1.73 m².
 - › Have a Kidney Failure Risk Equation (KFRE) greater than or equal to 25% at 2 years, as assessed with a valid equation.*
 - › Expect dialysis will be needed in the next 2 years.
- Potential donors are encouraged to contact a transplant centre for evaluation once the recipient is referred ([see infographic/website for living donor eligibility](#)).
- Transplant programs may triage referrals based on expected wait time to transplant.

* see KFRE calculators at (1) kidneyfailure.risk.com and (2) [QxMD Kidney Failure Risk Equation](#).



Which Patients Should Not Be Referred?

Kidney transplantation is not for everyone. These are situations when patients should not be referred for kidney transplantation:

- Patients with **active cancer** should not be referred until a remission or cure is achieved (except for non-melanoma skin cancer which can be referred).
- Patients with a **severe heart condition** that cannot be corrected, such as inoperable valvular disease, severe ischemic heart disease, or severe congestive heart failure.
- Patients with **significant underlying comorbidities** unlikely to survive the waiting time until transplantation.

To refer a patient, complete the [Ontario Kidney Transplant Referral Form](#). To facilitate timely referral, ensure that the referral package is complete including up-to-date cancer screening as per Ontario guidelines. Patients with cardiac risk factors will need to be referred to a cardiologist. The referral process is resource intensive and is a burden to many patients. Please contact your transplant center for advice if you are uncertain whether your patient would benefit from a referral.

Need this information in an accessible format?

1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@ontariohealth.ca

Important Patient Characteristics to Consider Before Referral

Patients with the following characteristics may benefit from transplant and can be referred. These are some considerations that may improve the evaluation time and safety of transplantation.

Obesity:

- Surgery may be difficult to perform and the risk of complications are high for patients with a BMI greater than 35 kg/m². Please work with your patient on safe weight loss as early as possible so this does not delay transplant surgery.

Smoking:

- Smoking increases the chance of perioperative and long-term complications. Please work with your patients to stop or dramatically reduce their smoking as soon as possible.

Older Patients (> 70 years of age):

- There is no age cutoff for transplant eligibility and carefully selected older patients can experience the benefits of kidney transplant.
- Older patients with multiple medical problems have a higher risk of death around the time of surgery and are unlikely to live longer than they would if they remained on dialysis.
- Consider referring older patients who are free from significant heart disease, who have a good functional status and have a potential living kidney donor.

For more detailed information on the criteria for referral, please see the [Ontario's Referral and Listing Criteria](#).