

## **Medical Terms**

### *For a kidney/pancreas transplant*

*This chapter defines many of the medical terms you may hear or read during your transplant journey.*

You will hear and read many new terms as you learn about transplants. It will help to know what these words mean. Share this chapter with your family, your support team, and living donors.



*You and your caregivers will learn many new words on your transplant journey.*

#### **Acute rejection**

A rapid reaction against the transplanted organ. It often occurs about a week after transplant, due to a strong immune response to the new organ.

#### **Allograft**

A transplanted organ between two individuals who are the same species (such as human), but who have genetic differences.

#### **Amylase**

An enzyme made by the pancreas, normally found in the blood. Blood tests of amylase levels show how well a transplanted pancreas is working.

#### **Antibody**

A protein made by your immune system in response to a foreign substance (see “Antigen”). Antibodies help your body fight off antigens.

#### **Antigen**

A substance that your body sees as a threat, such as a virus, bacteria, or transplanted organ. Your immune system responds by making antibodies and also activates other cells to fight off the antigen.

#### **Biopsy**

A procedure that is done to find diseases or conditions such as rejection. In a biopsy, a very small sample of a tissue or organ is removed and examined under a microscope.

**BK virus**

A common virus that lives in the urinary system of most adults. In healthy people, it is harmless. In kidney transplant recipients, it can sometimes cause kidney damage. We will test your urine after transplant to make sure the BK virus levels are not too high.

**Blood urea nitrogen (BUN)**

A waste product excreted by a healthy kidney. The BUN level in your blood shows how well your kidney is working to keep your blood clean.

**Caregiver**

The support person or team who will help you through the transplant process. Caregivers must be able to provide you with both physical and emotional support before and after the transplant. A caregiver could be a family member, partner, or friend.

**Catheter**

A plastic or rubber tube. One type of catheter may be placed in your bladder to drain urine. Another type may be placed in a blood vessel to allow us to access your bloodstream (*circulatory system*).

**Chronic allograft nephropathy**

A slow decline in kidney function after transplant. There may be many reasons for this problem. It is also called *chronic rejection*.

**Chronic kidney disease**

Damage to both kidneys that cannot be reversed. It is also called *chronic renal failure*.

**Creatinine**

A waste product produced by muscles and removed from the blood by the kidneys. Your creatinine level can show how well your kidney is working to keep your blood clean. After transplant, we will closely watch the creatinine level in your blood.

**Cross-matching**

A blood test that shows whether a potential donor's blood is compatible with a prospective recipient's blood.

- A *positive cross-match* means that the donor and patient are **not** compatible. The recipient's body would reject the transplant.
- A *negative cross-match* means there is no reaction between the donor and the patient. The transplant may proceed.

**Cytomegalovirus (CMV)**

A common virus. Most adults who have been exposed to the virus do not develop CMV disease. The virus can become active if your ability to fight

infection is reduced (see “Immunosuppression”). CMV can cause fever, low white blood cell count, stomach problems, and other illnesses.

### **Deceased donor**

A person who has died recently, whose family has agreed to donate their loved one’s organs for transplant. A deceased donor is also known as a *cadaveric donor*.

### **Delayed graft function (DGF)**

A slow recovery (“waking-up”) of a transplanted organ. DGF may take days to weeks. A kidney transplant recipient may need dialysis to keep their blood clean while waiting for the kidney to “wake up.”

### **Desensitization**

A treatment program to remove the antibodies in your blood that fight *human leukocyte antigens* (HLAs). If you have a very high *panel of reactive antibodies*, desensitization may allow you to receive a kidney from a greater number of donors. (See chapter on “Tissue Matching.”)

### **Diastolic**

The bottom number of the two numbers in a blood pressure reading.

### **Donor-specific antibodies (DSAs)**

Anti-HLA antibodies that can be in a transplant recipient’s blood. We screen for DSAs after transplant surgery. DSAs can be benign, or they can be an early sign of rejection of a transplanted organ. If we find DSAs in your blood after transplant, we will run more blood tests, or may do a kidney biopsy to find out if the DSAs are a problem.

### **Endocrinologist**

A doctor who specializes in treating patients with diabetes and other hormonal diseases.

### **End stage renal disease (ESRD)**

Chronic kidney disease that has worsened to the point where the kidneys cannot keep the blood clean enough on their own. Dialysis and kidney transplant are 2 ways to do the work that these kidneys can no longer do.

### **Glucose**

The type of sugar that the body uses for energy. A high glucose level in the blood can be a sign of diabetes.

### **Graft**

Transplanted tissue or organ, such as a kidney or pancreas.

### **Hematoma**

A collection of blood near the transplanted organ or biopsy site.

**Human leukocyte antigen (HLA)**

Proteins found on the surface of all cells. They help your immune system know what substances are part of your body and what are foreign objects.

**Hypertension**

High blood pressure.

**Immunosuppressants or immunosuppressives**

The type of drugs used to suppress the body's immune system. They are also called *anti-rejection medicines*.

**Immunosuppression**

The process of reducing the body's immune system responses to foreign objects or antigens. We use immunosuppression to stop your immune system from attacking the transplanted kidney. But, immunosuppression also makes it harder for your immune system to fight foreign organisms such as bacteria or viruses.

**Intravenous (IV)**

Anything given to a patient through a needle or catheter placed into a vein. The word *intravenous* means "into a vein." Liquids, medicines, and nutrients may be given through an IV during and after surgery.

**Living donor**

A healthy adult who donates one of their kidneys to someone who is approved for kidney transplant.

**Lymphocele**

Lymph fluid that may collect near the transplanted organ. It is caused by lymph vessels that are damaged (usually from surgery) and cannot return lymph fluid back to the veins.

**Lymphoma**

A type of cancer of the lymph system.

**Malignancy**

Another term for cancer.

**Mediset**

A system that helps organize medicines. A mediset is usually a box that has a different compartment for each day. This box helps you sort your pills so that it is easier for you to remember to take them.

**Nephrologist**

A doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating kidney disease.

**Noncompliance**

Failure to take medicines or follow healthcare instructions. It may shorten the time a graft is able to work. Noncompliance is also called *nonadherence*.

**Panel of reactive antibodies (PRA)**

A blood test done before transplant to test the recipient for “reactivity” to donor tissues. The test helps your doctors know if there might be a problem finding a transplant donor who is a match for you. Your PRA score will be between 0% and 100%. A high PRA means a high number of antibodies are in your blood, and it may take longer to find a donor.

**Patient Care Coordinator (PCC)/Patient Services Specialist (PSS)/Program Coordinator**

Transplant team members who schedule tests and appointments before and after transplant. They can answer questions about your evaluation.

**Patient-controlled analgesia (PCA)**

A way to control pain for a short time after surgery. PCA uses a hand-held control and a special IV pump that allows you to give yourself pain medicine as needed.

**Post-transplant lymphoproliferative disease (PTLD)**

Cancer of the lymph node or a lymphoma. This type of cancer is seen most often in transplant recipients.

**Primary care provider (PCP)**

Usually a non-specialist doctor who manages all your healthcare needs. A PCP may be a doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. Your PCP may refer you to specialists.

**Recipient**

A transplant patient who has received a transplanted organ.

**Rejection**

Injury to the graft caused by the recipient’s immune system.

**Renal**

Related to the kidneys.

**Stenosis**

A narrowing of a blood vessel or drainage tube in the body.

**Stent**

A tube or device placed in a vessel to keep it open or draining, such as a ureteral stent.

**Systolic**

The top number of the two numbers in a blood pressure reading.

**Thrombosis**

A blood clot.

**Tissue typing**

A blood test to determine which HLA proteins a possible organ donor or recipient has on their cells. This lets us know how close the match is between donor and recipient. See chapter on “Tissue Matching.”

**Transplant attending surgeon**

The doctor who is the main surgeon for your transplant surgery.

**Transplant fellow**

A doctor who is receiving special training in transplant surgery. This doctor will help with your care in the hospital after the surgery.

**Transplant nurse coordinator**

A nurse who has special training and skills in the health concerns of transplant patients. Your transplant coordinator is your resource for education, healthcare, and transplant care.

**Transplant nephrologist**

A doctor who specializes in treating kidney disease, with special training in kidney transplant. You will see this doctor often in the clinic after your transplant.

**Transplant renal fellow**

A doctor who specializes in treating kidney disease, who has finished medical residency and is getting extra training in transplant medicine.

**Transplant surgery resident**

A doctor who provides most of your day-to-day medical care in the hospital after surgery.

**United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)**

An organization that provides education about transplant and manages the waiting list for deceased donor organs. See “Resources” chapter for contact information.

**Ureter**

One of the two drainage tubes in your body that carry urine from your kidneys to your bladder.

**Urethra**

The drainage tube in your body that carries urine from your bladder out of your body.

**Waiting List**

The list of people in the U.S. who have been assessed for transplant and are waiting for deceased donor organs. This is also called the *wait list*.

**Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Transplant Services:  
206.598.3882