

Considering a kidney transplant from a hepatitis C infected donor

Department of Renal Transplant

Information for Patients

Produced: November 2025

Review: November 2028

Leaflet number: 1678 Version: 1

Introduction

We are asking you if you would accept a kidney from a hepatitis C virus infected donor. This leaflet will give you information about hepatitis C. It will explain why you should think about this choice. It will tell you about benefits and risks of the transplant. It is your choice if you want to accept a kidney or not.

What is hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that spreads through blood and bodily fluids. It lives in the liver and blood of the infected person. It can cause inflammation and scarring to the liver. The scarring can be bad. On average it takes 30 years for the scarring to become life threatening in hepatitis C patients. Transplant patients can get bad scarring more quickly if they are taking medicine that suppress their immune system.

Treatments for hepatitis C have changed over recent years. We can now cure over 95 in 100 patients who are infected. For the treatment you need to take tablets for 12 weeks. When the virus is cleared it does not come back. It does not affect your long term health.

Why am I being offered a hepatitis C infected kidney?

There are not enough donated organs in the UK. Sadly this means that many people die on the waiting list. This is true for those people who are difficult to transplant. This can be because they have a rare blood group or tissue type. Or if they have a lot of antibodies in their blood that makes it hard to match with others. Doctors are trying to find ways to increase the number of organs that can safely be transplanted.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

The recent breakthrough in the hepatitis C virus treatment now makes it possible to use organs from hepatitis C donors. These donors are often younger than average and may be healthier. They may have lower blood pressure and less heart disease and other medical conditions. Their donated organs may be of higher quality than average.

What are the benefits?

You may get a transplant quickly. This is helpful if you would need to wait a long time for a transplant.

Hepatitis C donors are often younger than average. They are less likely to have other important health issues. Their organs may be of higher quality. Their organs may work right away and last longer.

What are the risks?

The main risk is that you will become infected with hepatitis C yourself. If hepatitis C virus infection is not treated you may become jaundiced (yellow). You may get bad inflammation in the liver (fulminant cholestatic hepatitis). In 3 to 6 months without treatment, hepatitis C may cause kidney injury. We will offer treatment to cure you of the hepatitis C virus as soon as it has been confirmed that you have it. This will minimise the risk of any damage to you.

There is a small chance that the hepatitis C virus may not disappear after the 12 weeks of treatment. The chances of this happening are less than 2 in 100 cases. If this happens, we will offer you a different course of tablets. These tablets have shown to be highly effective in curing patients whose treatment has failed with other drugs. These drugs achieve cure in 96 to 98 in 100 of the infected patients. This means that it is very unlikely (1 chance in 2,500 cases) that the transplant team will not be able to cure you of the virus if you are infected.

All donors are screened for other infections like HIV or hepatitis B. The screening tests can very rarely miss infections. There is a very small chance that other infections could also be transmitted at the time of transplantation.

What is the experience of patients who have had a hepatitis C donor?

There have already been many studies looking at the results of transplanting kidneys from hepatitis C donors. These have mainly taken place in the United States. The study required that patients get treatment for hepatitis C very early (within 4 weeks) after transplantation. These studies show that it is possible to cure every patient of hepatitis C virus after kidney transplantation (100% cure rate). The kidneys then went on to work very well. The overall results were the same for the patients who got kidneys from hepatitis C donors as those for patients who got kidneys from regular donors.

How do I know that the kidney has not been damaged by the virus?

Hepatitis C can harm your liver and sometimes your kidney. In the UK, doctors have safely used livers from people with hepatitis C for over 10 years to help patients with liver damage from the virus. Only livers with very little or no damage from hepatitis C virus infection are used for transplantation. We do the same for kidney transplantation from hepatitis C donors.

We look at the health of kidneys that are offered for transplantation. We do this through a series of blood and urine (pee) tests. These are carried out on the donor before and after they die. Only kidneys with very little or no damage are used.

Hepatitis C virus does not damage the heart, lungs or pancreas. These organs should work just as well from a hepatitis C infected donor as from a hepatitis C negative donor. The British Liver Trust has more information about hepatitis C:

<https://britishlivertrust.org.uk/information-and-support/liver-conditions/hepatitis-c/>

What are the risks to my family?

- The risks to your family are very small. You can only pass on the virus to your family through infected blood and body fluids.
- Do not share your toothbrush and razor blades with anyone for the first 3 to 4 months. The virus is not transmitted through kissing and saliva. This is until you are cured of hepatitis C.
- It is rare but the virus can be passed on through sexual intercourse. You or your partner should use barrier contraception (condoms) until you are told that you have been cured of the virus.

How will I be treated after the transplant?

After your transplant you will have a specific and very sensitive blood test to look for hepatitis C in your blood. You will have 3 blood tests. We will take the first blood sample within the first 7 days after your transplant. We will take the second sample within the first 14 days. We will take the last sample within the first 6 weeks.

If any tests show you do have hepatitis C then your doctors will start you on a treatment within 3 to 10 days of the result. They will prescribe you with specific antiviral tablets. You will need to take these for 3 months. This will be either 1 extra tablet or 3 extra tablets a day. The exact number will depend on what treatment the doctors think is best for you.

During treatment you will have regular blood tests to make sure that the treatment is working. You will have more blood tests after finishing treatment. This is to check that you have been cured of the virus. If the virus disappears from your blood and cannot be detected 12 weeks after the treatment has stopped then you have been cured. We predict that more than 95 in 100 of patients will be cured.



If the first treatment does not work then we will give you a second 12 week course of treatment. This cures more than 95 in 100 patients whose first course of treatment has not worked. The new drugs for hepatitis C have very few side effects. The tablets are very well tolerated by patients taking them.

What happens to me if I refuse to accept this kidney?

It is your choice if you choose to get an organ from a hepatitis C donor. If do not want to accept an organ from such a donor you will stay on the transplant waiting list. You will continue to wait for a suitably matched organ.

Will I be entitled to compensation if I accept this kidney?

No, you will not be entitled to compensation. The current rules states that you are entitled if you have unknowingly been infected. This would not be the case if you knowingly accept a hepatitis C infected kidney.

Where can I find out more information?

Please first speak to your transplant doctor if you have any questions.

You can also call **0116 258 8266**.

More information

- **The Hepatitis C Trust** is a charity that helps people with hepatitis C. It is led by patients. You can call their confidential helpline at **0845 223 4424** or **020 7908 6221**. Or email them at helpline@hepctrust.org.uk for support and information about new treatments. Or visit their website: www.hepctrust.org.uk
- **The British Liver Trust** has more information about hepatitis C: <https://britishlivertrust.org.uk/information-and-support/liver-conditions/hepatitis-c/>

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net