

ORGAN TRANSPLANT CENTER

No one wants to hear the word 'rejection' after transplant. What exactly is rejection? Does rejection mean my transplant failed? Is rejection irreversible? The risk of rejection is present after transplant, but there are steps you can take to reduce the risk. Although the risk of rejection does decrease over time, it never goes away. There are two types of rejection—acute and chronic. Routine blood tests are used to monitor the functioning of your transplant. Biopsies are used to look at a sample of your transplant and confirm if rejection is present. It is important to remember that you may not have symptoms. Taking your medications as prescribed and completing the testing required is essential to lowering your risk of rejection and detecting it early.

What is rejection?

Our bodies are equipped with an immune system whose sole job is to protect the body from harm and disease. Transplantation involves putting a new organ into the body that matches you but is still different from you.

Rejection occurs when your immune system views the transplant as foreign and attacks with the intent to destroy it. This occurs even when your donor is a good match.

Immunosuppressant medications are prescribed after transplant to help prevent rejection by blocking your immune system's response to the transplanted organ. Missing even a single dose can make it more likely for rejection to occur, as this leads to your body not having enough medication in your blood.

Rejection can often be treated with the right medication or treatment. It is important that you complete the biopsies and blood tests ordered by your providers as often rejection does not have symptoms until very late in the process.

Acute rejection

Acute rejection occurs within the first year after a transplant but is more likely to occur within the first months. Acute rejection happens quickly and can be treated. Acute rejection does not mean that you will lose your transplant, but it does need to be diagnosed and treated as soon as possible.

Acute rejection can be either when specific cells in your immune system attack the transplant (acute cellular rejection) or when antibodies are produced that target the transplant (acute antibody rejection).

Some kinds of treatment for rejection can be done as an outpatient. Other treatment types may require a hospital admission.

Chronic rejection

Chronic rejection occurs over time and is a slower process. You won't necessarily show symptoms of rejection, so you cannot wait until you feel sick to speak with your medical team. The best way to prevent rejection is taking your medications as prescribed.

Treating chronic rejection is more difficult as it causes more permanent changes in the tissue of your transplant that eventually leads to loss of function.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your transplant team. We are here to help and provide you the tools and information to be successful both before and after your transplant.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section of our monthly newsletter will focus on support and resources offered both by the Organ Transplant Center and throughout the nation. Please utilize these as you need them and reach out with any questions.

Kidney and Pancreas line: 319-356-1136

Heart line: 319-356-1028

Liver line: 319-356-1137

Lung line: 319-356-2016

Medicare and Transplant

Medicare eligibility is based on age, disability, having end-stage kidney failure, or receiving a kidney transplant. No other organ transplant or need for organ transplant qualifies one for Medicare. There is a 1-year enrollment window for Medicare from date of kidney transplant. Delaying enrollment can increase chances of higher out-of-pocket expenses for anti-rejection medication. Medicare Advantage plans cover anti-rejection medications, and out-of-pocket expenses are subject to plan.

* For further questions or coverage changes, please contact the Organ Transplant Center financial counselors.

Video Resources

The Organ Transplant Center has put together videos to better explain the transplant evaluation process and provide additional patient education. Please click the links below to access these videos.

- [Kidney Transplant – Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Liver Transplant – Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Pancreas Transplant – Patient Education Videos](#)

Organ Transplant Support Group

Starting in February 2024, the UI Health Care Organ Transplant Center will begin having our support group every other month. The support group will also be a hybrid version—both in-person and by Zoom. Each group will be focused on a specific topic, with speakers followed by time for discussion. If you have any questions, please contact 319-467-8385.

Location:

Iowa Donor Network
550 Madison Avenue
North Liberty, IA 52317

Date:

October 10, 2024

Speaker: Transplant financial counselor

Zoom Information:

Meeting ID: 918 3643 6211
Passcode: 642098

Additional Resources

Social Security Disability

- [Adult Disability Starter Kit](#)
- [SSI Child Disability Starter Kit](#)

National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC): [How to Apply](#)

Iowa Anatomical Gift Fund: [Application](#)

Iowa Donor Network / Writing Your Donor Family: <https://www.iowadonornetwork.org/transplant-recipients/writing-your-donor-family>

University of Iowa Telepsychology Training Clinic offers free, short-term counseling to Iowans with limited access to mental health care.

- [Click here](#) to see if you qualify.