



# Better Than Dialysis Kidneys

This resource may be used during staff huddles to educate all staff about expanded criteria donor (ECD) Kidneys, high-Kidney Donor Profile Index (KDPI) kidneys, and how to talk with patients about the benefit of considering these kidneys as they are *better than dialysis*.

## Facts

There are almost 89,000 men, women, and children on the national kidney transplant waiting list. Yet only 25,498 transplants were performed in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

## What Exactly Are *Better Than Dialysis* Kidneys?

*Better than dialysis* is a phrase recognized by many patients, and dialysis and transplant professionals to highlight donor kidney alternatives to potentially improve the opportunity of receiving a kidney transplant sooner. ECD kidneys and high-KDPI kidneys are two such alternatives.

### ECD Kidneys

A kidney donated for transplantation from a brain-dead donor over the age of 60 years; or from a donor over the age of 50 years with two of the following:

- History of hypertension.
- The most recent serum creatinine greater than or equal to 1.5 mg/dl.
- Death resulting from a cerebral vascular accident (stroke).

This definition applies to the allocation of deceased donor kidneys.<sup>2</sup>

### High-KDPI Kidneys

The KDPI is a measure of kidney function. It considers multiple elements from the donor, such as age, weight, cause of death, history of diabetes, or exposure to Hepatitis C, and will estimate how long a kidney from a deceased donor may function after transplant.

#### Why is the KDPI score important?

- A kidney with a high-KDPI score may still function very well when transplanted but is expected to last for a shorter time than those with a lower KDPI of <60.
- Kidneys with a low KDPI are expected to last longer and are first offered to candidates who are expected to benefit the longest with a kidney transplant.<sup>3</sup>
- Matching the right KDPI kidney with the right patient reduces the number of repeat kidney transplants making more kidneys available for transplant.

Consenting to accept an ECD or a moderate-to-high KDPI kidney means a waitlist candidate may potentially experience a transplant sooner.<sup>3</sup> Transplant programs will ask patients for written consent to accept an ECD

<sup>1</sup> Health Resources & Service Administration. Organ Donation Statistics. Available at <https://www.organdonor.gov/learn/organ-donation-statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> Organ Procurement & Transplantation Network (OPTN) Glossary. Available at <https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/patients/glossary/#E>.

<sup>3</sup> UNOS. Increasing High KDPI Kidney Utilization. Available at <https://unos.org/news/improvement/increasing-high-kdpi-kidney-utilization/>.



kidney or a high-KDPI kidney. This is a personal decision that the patient should discuss with his or her nephrologist. When considering the challenges of remaining on dialysis, *better than dialysis* kidneys may be the best choice for many patients.

## Patient Conversation Starters

- Have you talked about “*better than dialysis*” kidneys with your nephrologist?
- Can we talk about ECD or high-KDPI kidneys and how these kidneys can benefit you?

## Resources

Organ Procurement & Transplantation Network: [How Kidney Donor Profile Index is calculated and used](#) (video)

End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) National Coordinating Center: [Understanding High-KDPI and Increased Risk Kidneys](#) (video)

Quality Insights Renal Network 4: [Understanding KDPI Scores in Kidney Transplant](#)