

# The Highly Sensitized Patient Program (HSP) for Kidney Transplant Recipients

# **The Highly Sensitized Patient Program (HSP) for Kidney Transplant Recipients**

## **What is the Highly Sensitized Patient Program (HSP)?**

- The HSP is a Canadian Blood Services program. The program works with provincial and territorial governments, and organ transplant programs across Canada.
- Some people have special health needs that make it hard for them to find an organ match from a deceased donor (a donor who has died). The goal of the HSP is to help these people have more transplant opportunities.
- When a deceased donor anywhere in Canada has 2 eligible kidneys, 1 kidney is offered to the HSP. The HSP tries to match a recipient anywhere in Canada with a kidney.

## **Who is considered a highly sensitized patient?**

- Your body has different ways to protect itself from infection. This includes destroying cells it does not recognize as its own.
- When your body does not recognize a cell, it makes a protein called an antibody.
- Antibodies destroy infections. They can also destroy transplanted tissues (like an organ transplant). You may develop antibodies from:
  - › Having a blood transfusion
  - › A previous organ transplant
  - › Being pregnant
- A highly sensitized patient has a high amount of antibodies. This makes them more likely to reject an organ after transplant.

## **How do I know I am a highly sensitized?**

- You will have a panel reactive antibody (PRA) test. The test measures the antihuman antibodies in your blood. It checks how your cells react to cells taken from the donor population.
- The test checks your risk for rejecting an organ after transplant.

- The test result is a percentage from 0% to 100%. This represents the amount of donors in the population that you will react to.
  - › For example, if you have a PRA of 20%, you will react to 20% of the donor population.
  - › If your PRA is 95% or higher, you are highly sensitized and can take part in the HSP.
- Once you are on the kidney transplant list, you will have your antibodies checked each month until you receive your transplant. This is to make sure you have not developed new antibodies that may cause you to react to a specific donor.

## **Can I receive a kidney from anywhere in Canada?**

Your doctors will decide this when there is a possible match. Many things affect this decision, like the distance and travel time for the kidney.

## **If there is a possible match for me, will I need to travel?**

No. The kidney will be sent to the hospital where your transplant surgery is being done.

## **How often do patients find a match through the HSP?**

- This depends on how many patients are in the program. This number changes often.
- We work with Canadian Blood Services to keep track of these numbers. Please ask your Transplant Coordinator for more information.

## **What happens if I have a possible match?**

- Our surgeon, nephrologist (kidney doctor), and tissue typing team will review the offer to make sure that it is safe for you to get the kidney.
- The tissue typing team will check to make sure you do not have any antibodies against the donor. This is called a virtual crossmatch.
- You will be called in for transplant if your health care team feels that the kidney is safe for you.
- After your transplant, you may need to take a medication called anti-thymocyte globulin (ATG) to lower your chances of rejection.

## **Is there a chance I may not have the transplant once I am in the hospital?**

Yes. This is possible with any transplant. This may happen because:

- You are sick.
  - › You may be sent home if you have a fever.
- You have an active infection.
- You have a reaction to the donor's blood.
  - › Before your transplant, the tissue typing team will do a test to make sure your body will not reject the organ. The test is done by mixing your blood and the donor's blood together. If there is a reaction, it means your body will reject the organ. The transplant will **not** be done.
- Your surgeon decides it is not safe to do the transplant. Your surgeon will talk to you about this if it happens.

We know that it is disappointing to get to the hospital and not have your transplant. Please remember that your health care team makes these choices based on what is safest for you.

## **Is it possible that I will not get a match?**

You may wait several years before you get a match. Your wait time may depend on how sensitized you are. We cannot predict when you will get a match.

## What can I do to raise my chance of getting a transplant?

- Follow the advice of your health care providers
- Try to stay healthy.
- Tell your health care team if:
  - › there are any changes in your health.
  - › you get a blood transfusion.
  - › you get an infection.

## Resources

### Canadian Blood Services

- › <https://blood.ca/en>

### Multi-Organ Transplant Program of Atlantic Canada (MOTP)

- › [www.motpatlantic.ca](http://www.motpatlantic.ca)

## Contact

If you have any questions, please contact your Kidney Recipient Transplant Coordinator:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember that your transplant team is here for you. Please talk with your Transplant Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.**

# Notes:

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Multi-Organ Transplant Program  
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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.