

Talking to Kids about Organ Transplant

Tips for Talking to Children

1. **Answer questions truthfully.** Always tell the child the truth. If you do not know the answer, it is okay. Tell the child that you don't know the answer but you will try to find the answer.
2. **Stick to the facts.** Giving the child the facts helps them process information.
3. **Provide simple explanations.** This will help the child's understanding when they are unable to grasp complex thoughts. Do not give the child too much information at one time. This is important when talking to toddlers and preschoolers.
4. **Use reassuring vocabulary.** Using reassuring vocabulary provides comfort as children begin to process their feelings surrounding the information provided. Assure the child that you are there to support them as well as their family member who is receiving an organ transplant.
5. **Provide more details as needed.** As children get older, they may want to know more details.

Common Questions

Why does my family member need an organ transplant?

There are many reasons someone might need an organ transplant. When someone has an organ that is sick and not working well, they may need a new, healthy one.

Where does the new organ come from?

Depending on the type of organ, it may come from a living donor or a donor who has died. Both types of these donors chose to donate part of, or all of, their healthy organs to help someone else live.

Will my family member be better after their transplant?

Sometimes people have problems after transplant. It is important to be honest so children have realistic expectations.

How long will my family member be in the hospital?

The length of the hospital stay will vary. Most patients will remain in the hospital 2-3 weeks after their organ transplant. Talk to the patient's care team about their length of stay to give children an accurate answer to this question.

Who will take care of me while my family member is in the hospital?

Talk to children about the care plan. Tell children when the organ becomes available and when the family member must go to the hospital to receive the organ. Sometimes, this happens quickly and without warning. Because sudden changes in routine can upset children, tell them what will happen in advance so they are prepared.