

Asymptomatic Donors and Recipients in Organ Transplants Except Lungs, Exempted from Covid-19 Testing

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In a major decision, the Union Health Ministry has relaxed the testing norms for Covid-19 for organ transplants, dropping mandatory tests for asymptomatic donors and recipients, except in lung transplants. The revised guidelines issued by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) aim to cut delays in organ retrieval and allocation. It is anticipated that this initiative will significantly reduce procedural delays and enable timely life-saving transplants.

Under the revised norms, Covid-19 RT-PCR testing will continue to be mandatory for both donors and recipients undergoing lung donation and transplants, considering the higher risk of respiratory transmission. Routine covid testing will not be required in asymptomatic patients for all other organs such as kidney, liver and heart.

In cases where donors or recipients show symptoms suggestive of Covid-19, doctors may decide on testing based on clinical assessment. Officials said the change follows the sharp decline in Covid cases and growing evidence that vaccination status has little impact on transplant outcomes. The move aligns with evolving global understandings of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in organ transplantation, where risk outside lung transplants is considered low.

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