About Living Donation for Kidney Transplant Recipients

A living donor is someone who is willing to donate one of their kidneys. Most living donors return to a normal lifestyle after surgery. At The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, we perform more than 100 living donor transplants each year.

Benefits of Living Donor Transplants

Living donor transplants are special. A living donor kidney is a better kidney than a deceased donor organ for several reasons:

- A living donor kidney means the patient is not on a long waiting list for a deceased donor kidney.
- A living donor kidney has a first year success rate of 94%, and identically matched persons may have greater than a 95% success rate.
- There is usually no preservation time with the living donor kidney. It can be walked from one operating room to another, and 30 minutes later, the transplanted kidney is working in the recipient.
- A living donor transplant allows the surgical team to plan a surgery date to allow for the best health of the patient and donor.

Becoming a Living Kidney Donor

If you find someone to be a living kidney donor, let them know that they need to:

- Be in good general health, such as free from diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, and heart disease. Your potential donor will have tests and a health exam to see if they are a good donor candidate.
• Be at least 18 years old. Most living donors are between 18 and 62 years of age, and sometimes 62+ years, depending on their medical history. Race and gender are not an issue with transplant.

• Have a test that checks their blood type and tissue. This is to make sure that a donor organ is less likely to be rejected by the body.
  ▶ If the blood and tissue type of your donor is not a match for you, they can still donate an organ as part of our donor exchange program. Willing donor and recipient pairs are matched for a swap donation.
  ▶ For example, suppose a mother wants to donate a kidney to her son, but is not a match. A second pair has a husband who wants to donate a kidney to his wife, but is also not a match. However, the mother is a match to the husband’s wife, and the husband is a good match to the son. In this case, an exchange is made so that both the son and wife get the kidney they need.

Living Donor Process

Here is a list of tests that must be reviewed and approved by the transplant team for a potential kidney donor to be selected as a candidate. Contact the Pre-Transplant Office. Your donor will be given a packet and educated about the process of kidney donation.

• Tests: Your donor will have blood tests and be asked to wear a 24 blood pressure monitor. He or she will also have blood draws to check their blood and tissue type. There will be urine tests, chest x-ray, EKG, and other tests to check their health.

• The transplant team will review your Living Donor’s file. If all of the testing is acceptable, he or she will then be scheduled for a computerized tomogram (CT) of their kidneys. If the CT shows healthy kidneys, then a planned surgery will be scheduled.

There are always possible risks with any surgery; however, these are reduced by the extensive evaluation done on all donors. Our goal is to help you and your Living Donor return to normal lives after surgery.
If my Living Donor is an acceptable donation candidate, then what happens next?

Surgery will be planned. The day of admission, both the recipient and the donor meet separately with the transplant surgeons and anesthesiologist. Consent forms are signed before surgery. Family members may wait in the Atrium on the 5th floor of Rhodes Hall during surgery and updates will be given to each family. Both the transplant recipient and donor will go to a recovery room for several hours to be watched closely after surgery.

The donor will be in the hospital for about 4 days. The recipient will be in the hospital 4 to 8 days. The usual recovery time, including time off of work, is 4 to 6 weeks after transplant and donation.

Who pays for the Living Donor’s medical bills?

The transplant recipient’s medical insurance covers the cost. However, some expenses are not covered, including:

- Travel and lodging expenses (if any). Some donors may qualify for help with travel and lodging. Ask the staff for details.
- Lost wages from work if they do not have ill or vacation time.

What will change for the Living Donor after surgery?

Most living donors return to a normal lifestyle after the transplant surgery. There are always possible risks with any surgery; however, these are reduced by the testing done on all donors.

We recommend for the donor’s continued health, that he or she:

- Follow with the transplant center’s post donor clinic for 2 years after donation.
- Goes to all follow-up doctor visits and has yearly physical exams.
- Avoids taking any medicines with Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or Naproxen (Aleve) to protect their remaining kidney.
- Talks with their doctor or pharmacists before taking any arthritis medicines that may harm their remaining kidney.
Where can I learn more about living donor transplant to share with those interested in donation?

- Call the Pre Transplant Office at Ohio State’s Wexner Medical Center for more information at (614) 293-6724 or 1-800-293-8965.

**National Websites for Living Donors (alphabetical order)**

- **Donate Life America**, a coalition with information on living donor information, and donating among the African American populations at [www.donatelifeline.net](http://www.donatelifeline.net)

- **Done Vida**, a website focusing on Hispanic and Spanish-speaking living donors at [www.donevida.org](http://www.donevida.org)

- **Transplant Living**, has information for both live organ donors and transplant information for recipients at [www.transplantliving.org](http://www.transplantliving.org)

- **United Network of Organ Sharing**, has information and resources for living organ donors at [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org)

- **US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**, has information and resources on transplant and organ donations at [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov)

- **US Transplant**, has data about transplant and living donors from local procurement agencies at [www.ustransplant.org](http://www.ustransplant.org)

**Local Websites for Living Donors**

- **Lifeline of Ohio** has information about transplant and donation from the local procurement agency at [www.lifelineofohio.org](http://www.lifelineofohio.org)

- **National Kidney Foundation** has information about living kidney donation at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

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Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).