

What to Know About Living Donor Organ Transplantation

If you are nearing kidney dialysis or waiting for a kidney or liver transplant, receiving a gift of a new organ from a living donor could be an option. In fact, many healthy adults can donate a kidney or a piece of their liver with low risk to themselves.

While most donated organs come from deceased donors, people can donate organs—typically a kidney or piece of a liver—while alive and well. Often, living donors do so to help save the life of a family member, friend, or someone they know with advanced kidney or liver disease. This is known as a directed donation. Others donate to someone they don't know, called non-directed donation.



What are the benefits of receiving an organ from a living donor?

Recipients who receive an organ from living donors have even better health outcomes than recipients who get organs from deceased donors. This is in part because living donors give under optimal conditions and the transplant surgery can be planned for in advance. Other benefits of living donation can include:

- Getting an organ faster, as most donors choose their recipient, bypassing the wait for an organ from a deceased donor.
- Avoiding or shortening dialysis for those with advanced kidney disease.
- Having more control over the process, including avoiding the stress of waiting for a long time for a possible organ from a deceased donor.

Who can be a living donor?

Most adults who are in good physical and mental health can become a living donor. That's good news for you as a potential recipient.

What does living donation involve?

Asking family or friends to consider donating a kidney or piece of their liver is a start. Anyone interested in becoming a living organ donor must go through lab tests, a physical exam, and a psychological evaluation. Blood and tissue matching is also checked.

Most donors go on to live healthy and active lives. After donation recovery, which takes a few weeks, donors can resume normal activities and live life as usual. Most donors report living donation as a positive emotional experience; they get to live to see the positive impact of their donation.

What other things do I need to know?

When asking others for an organ, know that living donation is typically safe for the donor, although surgery can present some risks like pain or infection. Donors do not pay for medical costs because the recipient's insurance typically covers expenses. However, donors may face costs like lost wages, travel expenses, or paying for child care. The good news is that there are financial assistance programs to help cover these costs.

Did You Know?

People have two kidneys, but one is enough to keep a normal, healthy body going strong.

When a donor gives part of their liver, the part they keep and the part they donate both regrow to full size.



Talk to your doctor to see if a transplant from a living donor is an option for you.

Learn more about living donation at organdonor.gov.

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