

# Living Kidney Donation

## Common Questions

### Why be a living kidney donor?

Kidneys from living donors are often healthier and last twice as long as kidneys from donors who have passed away. With a living donor, a transplant can happen quickly, which will help the recipient live a longer, fuller life.

### Who can be a living donor?

Lots of people can be a living donor as long as they are in relatively good health. The transplant center will give you a thorough evaluation to make sure it's safe to donate.

### How quickly will I recover after donating?

Generally, the donor leaves the hospital in a day or two, and most get back to simple activities within a week. Within a month, donors are usually completely healed without any activity restrictions.

### What is donation recovery like?

When you go home from the hospital, you'll get medications to make you feel comfortable. You probably won't have a lot of energy at first and you should get plenty of rest. Let friends and family help you with household chores. You might not be very hungry either, but your appetite will come back. Drink lots of fluids and eat when you feel like it. Try to do a little walking every day. As you feel better, you can do more activities. You won't be ready to lift anything over 10 pounds for about a month. You can shower. Avoid taking baths, swimming, and hot tubs, until your incisions are healed.

### Do I have to follow a special diet?

No. There's no need to follow a special diet. You're free to eat your favorite foods.

### Do I have to take medications?

You'll be given pain medication after the surgery. There's no need to take special medications just because you donated a kidney.

### What if I change my mind about donating?

You can change your mind at any time. Your decision will be kept private. The center will say that the evaluation prevented you from donating.

### How do I donate a kidney?

You start by calling a transplant center. Call the center nearest you, or if you know the recipient, call their center. They will ask you questions about your medical history and set up an appointment for your evaluation. You'll meet doctors and donation specialists in several fields. They will talk to you and do a physical exam and some tests to make sure you're in good health and a good candidate for donation. Plan on spending the day.

### What tests will I need?

Tests that will be done are a chest x-ray, EKG (taping sensors to your chest to listen to your heart rhythm), CT scan, and blood and urine tests. If there's the slightest question about your health, there may be more tests because the safety of the donor is a priority.

We hope this answers some of your questions.  
If you want more information, go to:

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### How is donation surgery done?

Specially trained surgeons use small incisions and instruments while being guided by a miniature camera. The surgery for donating a kidney is usually done through three dime-sized incisions and one incision about the width of a dollar bill.

It usually takes 2 hours.

### Should I take leave from work?

You'll have to take time off from work for the surgery and while you recover. Many employers offer paid time off for organ donation. If yours doesn't, you can use vacation and sick days.

### When can I go back to work?

Many people with desk jobs return to work after a few weeks but most take a month or so before they go back.

### How much does it cost to donate?

Many people are able to donate a kidney without any costs to themselves. Your recipient's insurance pays for most of the cost. You may incur some personal expenses. Financial coordinators are available to help you find all the funding you're eligible for to cover your expenses and protect your financial security throughout the process.

### Can I go back to exercising?

Generally, donors can go back to exercising within a month. Exercise is good for you. Most donors go back to doing everything they were doing before donation. If you participate in football, boxing, hockey, martial arts, or other contact sports, wear protective gear such as padded vests under your clothing to help protect the kidney.

### How often should kidney donors see a doctor?

The transplant center will see you a week after the surgery and then again at 6 months. Everyone should get a check-up once a year.

### What is the possibility of complications after kidney donation?

Since donors are carefully screened, over 99.9% have excellent results. Although rare, donating a kidney may have some complications and the transplant center will go over these with you before you decide to donate. Around 6000 people each year choose to become living kidney donors. Most donors say their experience was excellent and they would do it again if they could.

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