

Living Kidney Donor Transplant

What is a living donor Kidney transplant?

In a living donor kidney transplant (LDKT), a kidney is obtained from a healthy donor—in most cases a family member, spouse, or close friend. The kidney is transplanted into the recipient, or the person awaiting the kidney transplant.

Who can receive a kidney from a living donor?

People who are on the kidney transplant waiting list can be considered. Each person needs to have their records reviewed by the medical team to see if they have any medical reasons that would keep them from being able to receive a kidney from a living donor.

Who can donate part of their Kidney?

People who want to be a living donor must:

- A donor can be either a member of the patient's family, spouse, close friend, or unrelated.
- Be between the ages of 21 and 70.
- Have a blood type that is *compatible* with the blood type of the person they are donating to. This does not always mean that they are the *same* blood type.
- Be in very good physical and mental health.
- Have a Body Mass Index less than 35.
- Not have any potential risk factors for kidney disease.

What do I do if I decide to donate my Kidney?

If you are considering living kidney donation, please call the transplant office at (717) 531-6092 or 1 (800) 525-5395 to initiate the living donor evaluation process. When you call, you will be asked some questions about your health to ensure that you do not have any obvious conditions that would prohibit you from being a living donor. We may also ask you to have blood tests performed to confirm your blood type and to ensure that you are healthy. If it is decided that you may be able to donate your kidney, a more complete medical examination will be set-up for you at Penn State Hershey Medical Center.

What happens after I decide that I want to donate my kidney?

You will undergo a thorough evaluation before becoming a living kidney donor:

Some of the Studies are as follows:

- **Preliminary Crossmatch** - is an initial crossmatch done to determine if the recipient has antibodies against the kidney being considered for transplant.
- **Blood Samples** - will give us information about your body chemistry and past infections, Hepatitis and HIV status.
- **2 Hour Glucose Tolerance Test** – laboratory test to check for diabetic tendencies.
- **Chest X-ray** - will look for abnormalities of your heart and lungs.

- **EKG** - is obtained to make sure your heart action is normal.
- **24 Hour Urine Collection for Protein and Creatinine Clearance** - is done to evaluate protein excretion and creatinine clearance and assess kidney function. This test involves saving urine, in a jug usually provided by your local laboratory, putting it on ice and returning it to the lab 24 hours later.
- **Renal Arteriogram** - is the last test you will have providing all other studies are normal. This study will visualize any abnormalities in the blood vessels that supply blood to your kidneys. The donor's groin will be made numb and dye will be put into his/her system through a catheter to evaluate the blood vessels. It takes approximately 30 – 45 minutes to complete the test. The donor will then recover from the procedure in a hospital bed where he or she will lie flat for 6-8 hours. The donor will not be able to drive home from the test; therefore someone will need to be with the donor. The donor should take it easy over the weekend and may resume normal activities on Sunday.
- **A Physical Exam** – By an independent Nephrologist
- **Meetings with the Social Worker, the Living Donor Coordinator, and the Donor Advocate** - You will also receive a detailed consent form to take home and review. This form explains the operation, risks, and care you will receive after the operation is complete.
- **Final Crossmatch** - is performed the day before surgery. This is to make sure the recipient has not developed antibodies against the kidney being considered for transplant. If the recipient has developed antibodies (an incompatible crossmatch) the surgery will be cancelled.

Your study results will be reviewed by the Donor Advocate Team (DAT) to see if you qualify to be a living donor. The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) calls for at least one person on this team to have no contact with your kidney recipient. This is to ensure that the team members on the DAT have your safety in mind. You are free to talk to anyone on the DAT about any physical, emotional, or family concerns you may have related to the donor surgery.

If the DAT finds you qualified to be a living kidney donor, the operation will be scheduled during a time that works best for both you and the kidney recipient. This can be in a few days or several weeks later.

Next, you will meet with the transplant surgeon and the surgeon who will be performing your donor nephrectomy. They will explain the surgical procedure for removing your kidney as well as what to expect after the operation. They will discuss any side effects you may experience from donating a kidney.

What is involved in the donor and transplant operations?

On the day of surgery, the donor is taken to the operating room first. Donor kidney removals are performed by laparoscopic donor nephrectomy. Surgeons use pencil-thin cameras to view a detailed picture of your body, and insert tiny instruments into the body through small incisions to procure the kidney. Smaller incisions and less disruption inside the body mean less discomfort, a shorter hospital stay, and faster recovery

The donor operation usually lasts between two and four hours.

The person receiving the kidney is in a nearby operating room. Your kidney is transported quickly to the recipient's room.

The operation for the kidney recipient can last between four and six hours.

How long will I be in hospital and out of work?

Usually, the donor is admitted to the hospital the day of surgery and then stays in the hospital for two to four days.

Most people can return to work four to six weeks after surgery depending on how the surgery goes and on the type of job they have. If a donor has a desk job or has work that does not involve physical activity such as lifting heavy objects, they can return to work much sooner.

How will kidney donation affect my life after surgery?

After your incision has healed, you should experience no difference in your energy level, ability on the job, life expectancy, susceptibility to illness, or sexual functioning. You will not need any special diet or medications.

Follow-up care is given both in the immediate period after discharge from the hospital, and on a long-term basis with annual visits to the Medical Center.

What are the risks of becoming a living donor?

As with any major surgery, there is always a risk of infection or bleeding. Rejection of the donated kidney is also possible.

Our counselors are available to speak with you before, during, and after transplantation about any feelings or concerns you may have.

Are there long-term health risks associated with donating a kidney?

All donors are screened and tested before donation to ensure that removing the organ will not affect their health. Living donation does not increase risk of kidney failure or future health complications. Most donors return to their daily routine following recovery, and live a long, happy, and healthy life.

Am I making the right decision in donating my kidney?

This is a personal decision that only you can answer. You may find it helpful to find out as much as possible about the operation, its risks, and the effect it may have on your work and family before making a decision. The transplant team can provide you with any information you may need so that you can make an informed decision. The Donor Advocate Team will also make sure that you are told as much as possible about living donor kidney transplant.

How much will this cost?

The pre-operative evaluation, surgery, hospital stay, and outpatient visits, as well as any medical treatment related to the donor surgery within the first three months will not cost you anything. The recipient's insurance company will pay for all costs that are not covered by your insurance.

Your only direct costs related to kidney donation may be medications such as pain pills that you may need after returning home from the Medical Center. You will also need to pay for transportation and non-hospital lodging costs related to the evaluation and surgery. Keep in mind that you should plan your

household expenses and finances ahead of time to account for time off from work during the evaluation, surgery, and full recovery. Be sure to check with your company's Human Resources Department to learn what your options are under the Family Medical Leave Act, and for short-term disability and time off. This will be an important part of your decision-making process.