

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - Living Kidney Donation

What is the long-term outcome for kidney donors?

Donor survival is like that of the general population when matched for age, sex, and race. After donating one kidney, the remaining normal kidney compensates, and the overall kidney function returns to approximately 75-85 percent of your original kidney function. Recent studies show that donors have slightly increased risk for kidney disease when compared to healthy people.

What risks are there to kidney donors?

The chance of the donation affecting the living donor's lifespan is extremely low. With any surgery, there are risks. The risk of death within 30 days of donating a kidney is one in 3,300 (less risk than riding in a car). The risk of major post-op complications is about two to four percent. The risk of minor complications is close to 15 percent. Donors are encouraged to have yearly, long-term medical follow up.

The risk of kidney failure requiring dialysis or transplantation is very low but is increased in comparison to healthy non-donors.

Can a female donor have children after donating a kidney?

Women of childbearing age can have children after kidney donation because the donor surgery does not affect their reproductive organs. Pregnancy should be avoided for at least 12 months after donation. Ideally, donors will have completed childbearing prior to donation. Donors should talk with their physician about pregnancy and have good prenatal care.

What if I donate and need a kidney?

UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing) has established a policy that living donors who need a kidney transplant are given extra points on the transplant waitlist. This policy recognizes the selfless sacrifice of kidney donors. Fortunately, fewer than 250 living donors are known to have required dialysis care after kidney donation.

Are there any dietary restrictions before or after kidney donation?

If you are in good health, there will probably be no specific dietary restrictions. If you are overweight with a body mass index (BMI) over 30, you are encouraged to lose weight.

Following a healthy, well balanced low sodium (salt) diet is highly recommended. Avoid high protein diets.

What is the recovery period, and when can a donor return to normal activities?

The length of the hospital stay will vary depending on the individual's rate of recovery. The average length of stay is two days. Generally, heavy lifting is restricted for six to 12 weeks post- surgery. It is recommended that donors avoid contact sports that could potentially injure the remaining kidney.

Can I change my mind regarding Living Kidney Donation?

You have the right to withdraw your participation as a kidney donor at any time throughout the entire process, confidentially and without any penalty. Also, the recipient also has the right to deny receiving a living kidney donation.

What is the cost to me for donating a kidney?

The cost of all living donor medical testing appointments, surgery, and hospital stay should be covered by the recipient's insurance. The donor should not be billed for any charges related to their evaluation or donation. If by chance you receive a bill, please contact the transplant office as soon as you receive it so any billing issues can be resolved promptly.

Can I donate to someone if I am not related to them?

Yes. There is just as much success with unrelated donations as with related donation, as long as blood typing and cross match is compatible.

If I change my mind about kidney donation, would the recipient still be able to get a kidney?

Yes, the recipient is-placed on the UNOS waiting list for a deceased donor transplant while the living donor work up is in process. They will remain on the UNOS waiting list until a kidney would be identified for them.