



Top 10 Questions asked by Living Kidney Donors

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Question:

Why is a kidney transplant from a living donor better than one from a deceased donor?

Answer:

Better long term transplant kidney survival, a kidney from a living donor lasts about twice as long as one from a deceased donor...and it's more likely to avoid being on kidney dialysis.

Question:

What does it take to be a kidney donor?

Answer:

A living kidney donor is usually between ages 18 to 65 and in excellent health. Donors over age 65 are considered on a case by case basis.

Question:

What might rule out someone as a kidney donor?

Answer:

A history of heart disease, chronic lung or liver disease, kidney disease, hypertension, diabetes, cancer or untreated psychiatric disease is usually a contraindication to donating (i.e. the donor candidate is "ruled out"). Smoking, obesity and other health issues are considered on an individual basis.

Question:

What does kidney transplant surgery involve?

Answer:

The surgical procedure to remove a kidney from the donor is called a donor nephrectomy and takes approximately 2-3 hours. Surgeons primarily use a minimally invasive technique, using 3 small incisions to insert instruments and a slightly larger incision (~8 cm in length) to remove the donor's kidney. Typically donors spend 2-3 days in recovery before being discharged from the hospital.

Question:

What risks are there to kidney donors?

Answer:

Once a living donor candidate has been completely evaluated and cleared, the chance of the donation affecting his/her lifespan or lifestyle is extremely low. With any surgery and anesthesia, however, there are risks. Nationally, the risk of having a life-threatening problem with donating a kidney is 1 in 3,000. The risk of minor complications such as a minor wound infection is about 2-4%.

Question:

What is recovery like?

Answer:

Because the kidney donor operation is a major surgical procedure, donors find they have less energy and need about 4-6 weeks to return to their full pre-surgical activity level. For donors who work in an office they can usually return to work in 2 – 3 weeks. For those who work includes some physical labor it can take 4-6 weeks before they could return to work.

Question:

Who pays for a donor's medical costs?

Answer:

All expenses for the medical work-up and transplant surgery are covered by the recipient's health insurance. In considering donation, candidates need to consider additional expenses such as:

- Travel to your recipients Transplant Center
- Parking, lodging, gas, bridge tolls and other incidentals
- Lost wages if sick time or short-term disability from work is not available.

The financial coordinator and social workers can discuss your specific circumstances in more detail.

Question:

What is the long-term outcome for kidney donors?

Answer:

The New England Journal of Medicine and Journal of the American Medical Association published long-term studies in 2009 and 2010 analyzing outcomes of kidney donors. One study followed 80,000 live kidney donors dating back to 1994, while the other studied 3,698 individuals who donated a kidney between 1963 and 2007. Results showed:

- Donor survival was similar to that of the general control population (people who had not had a kidney removed) matched for age, sex, and race or ethnic group.
- The rate of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) was significantly lower in the group of patients who donated a kidney than the rate in the general population (180 versus 268 per million per year).

After donating one kidney (removing 50 percent of the functioning kidney mass), the remaining normal kidney compensates and the overall kidney function (measured in GFR, or glomerular filtration rate) increases to approximately 70 percent of baseline at about two weeks and approximately 75 to 85 percent of baseline at long-term follow-up.

Question:

Can a female donor have children after donating a kidney?

Answer:

Women of childbearing age can have children after kidney donation because the donor surgery does not affect their reproductive organs.

Question:

Does a donor need follow-up medical care after donation?

Answer:

The Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) now requires transplant hospitals to follow up with kidney donors at regular intervals (6 months, 1 year and 2 years). Many hospitals have expanded this to include a 1 week, 2 weeks and a 3 month checkup. The cost of the check ups are fully covered, there is NO cost to the donor. After the 2 years you should continue to have at least a yearly checkup with your primary care physician.