



Facts About Living Kidney Donation

What is living kidney donation?

Living kidney donation takes place when a living person donates a kidney to someone in need of a transplant.

History

The first successful living donor transplant was performed in 1954 between 23-year-old identical twins. Doctor Joseph E. Murray at Peter Brent Brigham Hospital in Boston, MA, transplanted a healthy kidney from Ronald Herrick into his twin brother, Richard, who had chronic kidney failure. Richard Herrick went on to live an active, normal life, dying eight years later from causes unrelated to the transplant.

Quick Facts about Living Donation:

- A live organ can come from a family member, good friend, spouse, in-law or even from a stranger. Thanks to improved medications, a genetic link between the donor and recipient is no longer required to ensure a successful transplant.
- The organ most commonly given by a living donor is the kidney. People usually have two kidneys, and one is all that is needed to live a normal life. When the kidney is removed, the single normal kidney will increase in size to compensate for the loss of the donated kidney. Parts of other organs including the lung, liver and pancreas are now being transplanted from living donors.
- To donate a kidney, you must be in good health and have normal kidney function.
- There are some programs, such as paired exchange and plasmapheresis, which may help donor/recipient pairs with blood types that are incompatible.
- If you wish to donate to a stranger, it is important to educate yourself on donation and make sure you understand the risks and benefits of donation. If you decide to pursue donation, you will need to contact transplant centers in your area.
- Donors are never financially compensated. Under federal law, it is illegal to receive money or gifts in exchange for an organ donation. The cost of the living donor's evaluation, testing and surgery are generally paid for by the recipient's Medicare or private health insurance. Time off from work and travel expenses are not covered by Medicare or private insurance. However, donors may be eligible for sick leave, state disability and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- A kidney can be removed in either of two ways, the traditional open surgery or the laparoscopic technique.

What if I have more questions?

If you have additional questions, you should speak to a transplant physician or to the transplant coordinator at your nearest transplant center. You can also get more information by contacting the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan.