

15 MOST COMMON MYTHS AND CONCERNS ABOUT LIVING DONATION

Concern: The donor will feel badly if the recipient's body rejects the donated kidney...

Myth: Donating a kidney is a dangerous procedure...

Myth: Out-of-pocket expenses for the donor will be too high...

Concern: What if a donor will need a kidney transplant later in life?

Myth: Members of the transplant team will pressure someone to be a donor...

Myth: Donating a kidney reduces the donor's life expectancy...

Concern: I don't completely understand what the evaluation, surgery, and recovery are like for the donor...

Concern: The donor's family will not be taken care of while the donor recovers...

Myth: No one will volunteer to be a donor.

Fact: Kidney transplants are the most successful organ transplants, with a 90-95% success rate. **Living donor's kidney's generally last 15-20 years**, while deceased donor transplants last 10-15 years.

Fact: Most donors only spend **1-4 nights** in the hospital, and are able to return to work in 2-3 weeks. The risk of complications from a donation is low, but as with any major surgery there are risks involved.

Fact: It is the **recipient's insurance** policy that covers the transplant and transplant-related follow-up. Lost wages and medical treatment post-transplant are NOT covered by recipient's insurance. American Transplant Foundation (ATF) can provide **financial assistance** to donors in need for lost wages.

Fact: Estimated risk of kidney failure at 15 years after donation is **3 per 1,000** donors. Donors have lower rates of kidney failure than general population (**0.9% vs. 3.26%**), but **0.14%** higher lifetime risk compared to healthy nondonors. Should a donor ever be in need of a kidney, he/she would be given priority on the list.

Fact: Donors are free to change their mind about donation at any time during the evaluation process. Donors will not be responsible for letting the recipient know if they choose to not donate.

Fact: Donating a kidney does not reduce live donor's life expectancy. Interestingly enough, people who have donated a kidney **out live** the average person.

Fact: Transplant centers offer all the information one needs to know about living donation. Support programs like ATF's **1+1 = LIFE Mentorship Program** helps connect recipients and donors with those who have already undergone the process.

Fact: ATF provides **financial assistance** and mentorship to donors, recipients, and families to help make the process simpler for families who face financial hardship.

Fact: Since the first successful donation in 1954, over 50,000 people have become living donors, with an average of **6,000 happening annually**. **If your family members/friends are not a match**, they can still save your life through paired exchange programs. Also, **unrelated donors**, or **altruistic donors**, are becoming more and more frequent.

Concern: The recipient will feel guilty if someone donates...

Fact: Living donors are true heroes. Most donors say that seeing their recipient's improved health after transplant more than outweighs the pain and inconvenience of donating.

Myth: Not all religions support living donation...

Fact: All major religions in the U.S. support living and deceased organ donation.

Concern: I have never met a living kidney donor. Can I speak with someone who has been through this process?

Fact: American Transplant Foundation's **volunteer mentors** can provide specific advice and guidance as well as share about their personal journeys as living donors.

Myth: Surgery will affect the donor's ability to have children...

Fact: There is no evidence to support that kidney donation impacts the ability to have children. Donors should be open and upfront about their donation when consulting obstetricians or gynecologists.

Concern: The surgery scars will be unattractive...

Fact: Depending on the type of surgery, scars can be as small as **3** inches long, and can fade with time.

Myth: The donor needs to be a family member in order to be a match...

Fact: A living donor doesn't need to be biologically-related to the recipient. Donors usually need to be between the ages of 18 and early 60s. Donors must be willing to donate, have a blood type that is compatible with the recipient's (kidney swap is also an option), and not have diabetes, or high blood pressure.

Myth: The donor pays for everything

Fact: The transplant recipient's Medicare or private health insurance will pay for the following for the donor: evaluation to determine if the person is a good candidate for living donation; Donation surgery; Post-operative care.

Myth: If a person isn't a match then there is no hope and that is the end of the road.

Fact: There are 3 different types of donation directed, non-directed, and paired. Paired is also known as a kidney exchange where candidates "trade" donors so the candidates can receive a kidney from a compatible donor.



American Transplant Foundation

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How we can help you: **we will match you with a certified personal mentor** to help you throughout your transplant journey. They know what you are going through and can relate in ways others cannot. After all, all of them are recipients, donors or caregivers themselves. We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and are not affiliated with any transplant centers.

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