



Becoming a living kidney donor in Ontario

What you should know

Living kidney donation is when a person who is still alive gives a kidney to a person who needs a transplant. Donating a kidney to someone is a big decision.

What are the benefits of living kidney donation?

- Kidneys from living donors work longer than kidneys from deceased donors.
- The transplant usually happens much quicker without waiting as long. The transplant may even be done before the person with kidney failure needs dialysis.
- The transplant surgery can be timed for when the donor and the person with kidney failure are in the best health possible.

How do I know if I can donate my kidney?

To know for sure if you can donate, you need to get an in-depth medical exam by the living donation program at a kidney transplant centre. They are the experts at living kidney donation and kidney transplant.

To be a living kidney donor there are some things that must always be true:

- You must be at least 18 years old
- You **must not** have:
 - kidney disease
 - diabetes or be taking medications for diabetes
 - heart disease, or must not have had a heart attack or stroke in the past
 - cancer (other than a mild skin cancer) that has not been cured
- You must not be pressured or paid by anyone to donate your kidney

You do not need to be related to the person you donate to but your blood groups must be compatible if you want to donate directly to that person. Even if you are not a blood group match, there is still a way to help them get a kidney transplant (see ways to be a living donor).

Your living donation program can work with you to find the best option for you.

Many other things will be looked at as part of your overall health to decide if you can donate a kidney.

Your living donation program will look at the following things:

- **Your age** – There is no upper age limit to becoming a donor. Kidneys from healthy, older living donors work well, especially for older recipients. If you are over the age of 75, you may have other health conditions that prevent you from donating your kidney.
- **Your weight** – If you are overweight, surgery is harder on your body. Being overweight also increases your chance of having long term health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease. If you are very overweight, a living donation doctor will likely decide that you are not a good fit to be a living donor unless you are able to lower your weight.
- **If you smoke** – People who smoke have a higher chance of things going wrong during the donation surgery and in the future. Living donation programs will sometimes consider donors who smoke but it is best if you quit.
- **High blood pressure** – If your high blood pressure is well controlled with lifestyle changes or medication, where the high blood pressure has not damaged any of your organs, you may be able to become a donor.
- **Kidney stones** – If you have kidney stones or have had them in the past, your living donation doctor will carefully look at your medical records and tests to decide if you are able to donate.
- **How well your kidneys are working** – Your living donation program will do tests to make sure that you have enough kidney function for you and the person getting your kidney. You will lose about 25% to 40% of your kidney function after you donate. Your other kidney will compensate to make up some of the function for the kidney you no longer have.

There are many ways to be a living donor in Ontario:

1. Donate a kidney to someone who you know who is waiting for a transplant
2. Donate to the Canadian Kidney Paired Donation Program
3. Donate your kidney to someone in your local transplant program, as part of a living donor pair or to someone on the provincial deceased donor waiting list



What is the Canadian Kidney Paired Donation Program?

The Canadian Kidney Paired Donation Program is a country wide kidney exchange program that helps a donor and patient with kidney failure who are not a match to each other find another pair where kidneys are 'swapped' so that everyone receives a kidney that matches.

For more information, visit

blood.ca/en/organs-tissues/becoming-live-kidney-donor

What if I change my mind about donating?

You can change your mind about donating at any time in the process. If you change your mind you do not need to explain why you no longer want to donate. Your potential recipient will not be informed about your interest, and your living donation program will fully support your decision.

As a potential donor, your participation is private and you can back out at any time.

If you would like to learn more about living kidney donation, contact your local living kidney donation program or visit renalnetwork.on.ca/transplantpatienthub

STEPS IN A LIVING KIDNEY DONATION

- Living kidney donors need to be in good health. The living donation program needs to make sure that the donor is at a low risk of having complications after the donation.
- The living donation program will do many medical tests to make sure that the donation is safe for the donor and the person getting the donated kidney.
- Getting all of the tests done to become a living donor takes between three and six months. In some cases, it can take up to a year if more testing is needed.
- Many people usually need to be tested to find the right donor for a person in need of a kidney. If you would like to be a donor, contact your local living donation program to talk to a health professional.

This is a description of the steps that will happen during your kidney donation. There may be times when donation is delayed if your recipient is not ready for surgery. If this happens, some of the tests may need to be updated before the surgery. Your living donation program will give you details about your situation.



For more information about the Ontario Renal Network please visit renalnetwork.on.ca

Need this information in an accessible format?

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