

## Living Kidney Donation

### Introduction

Living kidney donation is the donation of a kidney from a healthy fit person to someone with kidney disease. Over recent years having a kidney transplant from a living donor has become common and is a successful treatment for people with kidney disease.

Donating a kidney is a big decision and it is important that you have all the information you need to be able to make the right decision for you.

This information leaflet gives simple advice on living kidney donation and is part of a series of leaflets on kidney transplantation.

### Who can donate?

Living donors are often a close relative such as a parent, brother or sister, son or daughter, nephew or niece, but may also be individuals who are not related but have an established emotional relationship with the recipient such as a partner, spouse or close friend. Donors may also offer to give their kidney to someone who is on the waiting list for a transplant but whom they have never met before (this is called non-directed altruistic donation).

Living donors must be over the age of 18 and are generally under 70 years of age. They must be fit, healthy and not suffer from high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, heart disease or kidney disease.

### What do I do if I am interested in donating a kidney?

Donating a kidney is a rewarding experience and it is important that you think about it carefully before making a decision. You need to understand the benefits and risks before you make the decision to become a donor. The decision to donate must be voluntary and must be right for both you and the person you want to give a kidney to (known as recipient).

If you know the person you want to donate your kidney to you should talk it through with them. It is also important to find out as much information as you can and the kidney doctors and the living donor transplant coordinator can give you support and advice.

### What are the benefits of live kidney donation?

**There are many benefits to live kidney donation:**

- The evidence shows that a kidney from a living donor is usually healthier and will work better and last longer
- It is possible to have the kidney transplant before dialysis is needed
- The kidney transplant can be planned when both the donor and the recipient are in the

### What are the risks of living kidney donation?

All surgical procedures carry some risks and this is no different for living donation. The general risks are:

- Infection
- Bleeding

There is a slightly increased risk of living donors developing high blood pressure. The risk of death is very rare and has been estimated as 1 in every 3,000.

### Can I live with one kidney?

You can live a normal healthy life with one kidney. After the removal of the kidney, the remaining kidney enlarges and is able to do the work previously done by the two kidneys.

### What tests need to be taken?

In order to become a living donor a number of special tests need to be taken to check whether you are suitable to donate your kidney and have a blood type that is compatible with the recipient.

If the blood types are compatible you will need to have further tests taken to check you are in good health. The tests are commonly called “work up” and include:

- Assessment of your medical history
- Full physical examination
- Blood and urine tests
- Chest x ray
- ECG to check your heart
- Scans to check your kidneys
- C T Scan

Sometimes some other tests will be needed. The kidney doctor will let you know if any health problems are discovered during the work up test.

In addition to the work up tests an independent assessor will meet separately with you and the recipient. The reason for this is to ensure that you and the recipient are not being put under pressure to go through with the living donation. If the assessor feels pressure is being applied then the donation will not be allowed to happen.

### How long does the “work up” take?

The work up for living donation normally takes between 6 to 9 months. The aim is to complete the work up within 18 weeks. However if medical problems are discovered extra tests and treatment may be needed which can extend the work up time. Your live donor coordinator will

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keep you aware of any problems.

If all the test results show you are healthy and are suitable to donate a kidney the transplant doctor will give you a date for the operation.

### What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind and want to withdraw your offer you can stop at any point of the process. You will be supported by the live donor coordinator in your decision.

### How is the kidney removed?

There are two types of procedure that may be used to remove the donated kidney. The transplant doctor will talk to you about this and will talk to you about the procedure and what to expect. Both types of procedure are performed under general anaesthetic, which means you will be asleep during the operation.

The first type of procedure is called an open nephrectomy. This surgery is performed by removing the kidney through a 6-8 inch cut in the side or tummy area. The second type of procedure involves keyhole surgery (also called laparoscopic). This surgery requires 3-4 small cuts on the tummy through which a tiny camera and surgical instruments can be inserted. An additional 4 inch cut is made in the lower tummy area to remove the kidney.

The operation normally takes about 2 hours. When you return to the ward you will have a plastic tube into your bladder so that the nurses can check the amount of urine your kidney is producing. Following the removal of your kidney you will experience some pain and this can be controlled by drugs.

### How long will I be in hospital and what happens when I'm discharged home?

Recovery following donation is gradual and different people recover at different rates. The average stay in hospital is between 4 - 7 days.

When you go home you will need to take it gently for the first 3-4 weeks by getting regular rest and avoiding heavy lifting. Walking is good exercise and should be encouraged. You should not do anything that causes you discomfort. If you work your transplant doctor will advise you on the length of time you need to be off sick.

### Will the transplant work?

There is no guarantee that any kidney transplant will work. However living kidney transplantation offers the highest success rate with 90-95% working well one year after the operation.

### What follow up is needed after the operation?

You will be given an appointment to see the transplant doctor 6 weeks after your discharge from hospital. It is then recommended that you attend an annual clinic appointment.

### Where can I get more information from?

The renal unit's live donor coordinator can be contacted for advice and information. There are a number of useful websites that provide general information.

National Kidney Federation [www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)

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UK Transplant [www.uktransplant.org.uk](http://www.uktransplant.org.uk)

### Our commitment to confidentiality

We keep personal and clinical information about you to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment. Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We will share information with other parts of the NHS to support your healthcare needs, and we will inform your GP of your progress unless you ask us not to. If we need to share information that identifies you with other organisations we will ask for your consent. You can help us by pointing out any information in your records which is wrong or needs updating.

### Additional Sources of Information:

Go online and view NHS Choices website for more information about a wide range of health topics <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

You may want to visit one of our Health Information Centres located in:

- Main Entrance at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital Tel: 0121 424 2280
  - Treatment Centre at Good Hope Hospital Tel: 0121 424 9946
- or contact us by email: [healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk](mailto:healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk).

Dear Patient

We welcome your views on what you liked and suggestions for how things could be improved at this hospital. If you would like to tell us and others about your experience please make your comments through one of the following sites:

- NHS Choice:- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Patient Opinion:- [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk)
- I want great care:- [www.iwantgreatcare.org](http://www.iwantgreatcare.org) (Here you can leave feedback about your doctor)

Be helpful and respectful: think about what people might want to know about this hospital or how your experiences might benefit others. Remember your words must be polite and respectful, and you cannot name individuals on the NHS Choice or Patient Opinion sites.

**If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or treatment, or anything you do not understand or wish to know more about, write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.**

