Living kidney donor evaluation

Considering becoming a living kidney donor?

Living kidney donation is a generous gift that can help someone with kidney failure receive a transplant sooner and achieve better long-term outcomes. Protecting the health, safety and well-being of potential donors is our highest priority.

Before donation can occur, all potential donors undergo a comprehensive medical, surgical and psychosocial evaluation to determine whether donation is safe and appropriate.

Who can be evaluated as a living kidney donor?

Individuals interested in donating a kidney may be considered for evaluation if they:

- Are adults able to make informed healthcare decisions
- Are in generally good physical and emotional health
- Understand the risks and benefits of donation
- Are donating voluntarily without pressure, coercion or financial incentive

Each donor is evaluated individually, and acceptance is based on a thorough review of their overall health and circumstances.

What does the evaluation include?

The living donor evaluation is designed to ensure that donation is safe for the donor and suitable for the recipient.

Medical history review

Our team will review:

- Current and past medical conditions
- History of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or kidney disease
- Previous surgeries and hospitalizations

- Current and past medications
- Allergies
- History of infections
- Family medical history, including kidney disease, heart disease and cancer

Social and lifestyle assessment

We also discuss:

- Occupation and employment status
- Living arrangements
- Health insurance coverage
- Family and caregiver support
- Tobacco, alcohol, and drug use
- Emotional and mental health history

Physical examination

A comprehensive exam includes:

- Height and weight measurements
- Body mass index (BMI)
- Blood pressure and vital signs
- Evaluation of major organ systems

Laboratory and diagnostic testing

Testing may include:

- Blood type testing
- Kidney function testing
- Blood and urine testing
- Infectious disease screening
- Heart and lung evaluations
- Kidney imaging studies

- Age-appropriate cancer screenings

Additional testing may be recommended based on an individual's medical history.

Conditions that may prevent donation

For safety reasons, some medical or psychosocial conditions may make kidney donation inappropriate. Examples include:

- Active cancer
- Active HIV or hepatitis infection
- Diabetes
- Poor kidney function
- Significant heart or lung disease
- Active substance use disorder
- Uncontrolled mental health conditions
- Current pregnancy
- Severe obesity
- Recent kidney stones
- Evidence of coercion or financial motivation for donation

These conditions may prevent donation permanently or until the issue has been resolved.

Additional factors reviewed

Some health conditions do not automatically prevent donation but may require further evaluation. Examples include:

- High blood pressure
- Elevated body mass index (BMI)
- Certain past cancers
- Previous kidney stones

- Blood or clotting disorders
- Chronic medical conditions
- Mental health history
- Limited social support

Each situation is reviewed carefully by the transplant team.

Psychosocial evaluation

All potential donors meet with members of the transplant team to discuss emotional readiness and support systems.

The psychosocial evaluation helps ensure that donors:

- Understand the donation process
- Are making an informed and voluntary decision
- Have realistic expectations about recovery
- Have adequate emotional and social support

Independent donor advocates are available throughout the process to help protect donor interests and answer questions.

Living donor rights

Potential donors have the right to:

- Receive complete information about donation and its risks
- Ask questions at any time
- Decide not to proceed with donation
- Withdraw from the evaluation or donation process at any point

A donor's decision to stop the process will be respected and kept confidential whenever possible.

How donor eligibility is determined

Once the evaluation is complete, a multidisciplinary transplant team reviews the findings. The team considers:

- Overall health and kidney function
- Surgical risk
- Emotional and psychosocial readiness
- Long-term donor safety

Additional testing may be recommended if more information is needed before a decision is made.

Applicants are notified of the team's decision and any recommendations for follow-up care.

Our commitment to donor safety

Living kidney donation is a remarkable act of generosity. Throughout the evaluation process, our primary responsibility is to protect the health and well-being of both the donor and recipient.

Our transplant team is committed to providing comprehensive education, compassionate support and individualized care to help potential donors make informed decisions.

Contact us

If you’re interested in becoming a living kidney donor or would like more information about the evaluation process, contact our transplant program at 800-275-6401. Our team is available to answer your questions and guide you through the next steps.