Today, kidney transplantation has expanded to include organs from both cadaveric and living donors. UWMC Transplant Services has an active Living Donor Program to identify, educate, and evaluate potential living kidney donors for our transplant patients.
Are there different types of kidney donors?

There are two types of living kidney donors:

- A living related donor (LRD) is a blood relative who desires to donate to a family member.

- A living unrelated donor (LURD) could be a spouse, in-law, friend, co-worker, or anyone who desires to donate a kidney to a potential recipient.

What is the success rate for living kidney donation?

With a LRD or LURD transplant, the surgery can be planned so that the recipient’s well-being is enhanced. The transplant can also be accomplished much sooner than a cadaveric (CAD) kidney transplant. This allows the recipient to have the opportunity to be in as good health as possible at the time of surgery. In addition, after the transplant, there may be more options in the use of anti-rejection medications.

The success rate for a living related kidney transplant (LRD) is over 95 percent for the first year. About one half
of the LRD transplants have been known to still be functioning after 15 years.

The living unrelated kidney transplant (LURD) has a success rate comparable to the LRD transplant for the first year. This compares to a success rate of 90 percent after the first year for a patient who receives a cadaveric kidney transplant (CAD).

“My sister was on dialysis. I was watching her get sicker. I was glad I could do something to help her get better.”

**Whom do you talk to?**

You may want to talk about living kidney donation with your family members, spouse or partner, friends, co-workers or other people who may be interested in donating.

Providing family and friends with general information and a contact phone number is an excellent place to start.

If talking about living kidney donation is uncomfortable for you, ask a close friend or family member to act as your advocate.
“I asked my grandmother to spread the word for me to the rest of the family. I knew my grandmother would not be the donor, but she was a great intermediary. It took the spotlight off of me.”

Then you may want to ask that person to come with you for your evaluation appointments. Your advocate can relay information about living kidney donation to others.

**Tips on Talking about Living Kidney Donation**

*Speak from your heart.*

Take time to listen to the feelings and concerns of your family members or friends when you talk about living kidney donation.

*Pick a place and time that feels right.*

Your family member or friend needs to feel comfortable and have time to talk.

*Be careful not to place pressure on others.*

Other factors in the lives of others may prevent your family member or friend from being a living kidney donor.
Give it time.

Don’t expect an answer right away. People will need information, time, support and “space” to decide. They may need time to talk with their own family, employer or others involved in their daily lives.

What other considerations are important when talking with family and friends?

Work – Kidney donation is major surgery with a recovery time of 4 to 6 weeks. Your family and friends may lose wages if they miss work. Sometimes, this time off can be covered with sick leave and vacation pay or donated time from other employees. Employees in the U.S. may qualify for special leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Some progressive employers and state governments, have arranged for paid leave specifically for living donors. Encourage your family and friends to talk to their employer about the types of time-off benefits available.

Family – Certain kidney diseases have a genetic component, so it may be in the best interest of family to seek genetic testing and counseling. The Living Donor Program cannot pay for genetic testing and counseling, so please consult your
insurance carrier if you need more information about genetic testing and counseling services under your policy coverage.

**Pregnancy** – Pregnancy may create a slightly greater risk for the remaining kidney. Kidney donation should not interfere with a woman’s decision to become pregnant at a later date. If the donor should become pregnant it is important to have her obstetrician consult with a nephrologist (kidney specialist) for proper monitoring during pregnancy.

**Religion** – The majority of religions view organ donation as the highest form of charity and love. A list of general information about many religions is provided to all potential kidney donors. Please contact your clergy for more information about your church’s doctrine.

**Smoking and Drug Use Policy** – The transplant program recognizes that the use of tobacco, marijuana, and cocaine negatively impacts patient health. It increases morbidity and mortality due to multiple factors, including lung infections, progression of coronary artery disease, and peripheral vascular disease. Use of marijuana and illicit drugs is **prohibited** in our pre-transplant patients.
Potential kidney donors are required to have stopped smoking for a minimum of 30 days prior to the start of the medical screening process.

So, who can donate?

Persons considering living kidney donation should be:

- Over the age of 18.
- In good health.
- Body mass index (BMI) no greater than 35. BMI less than 30 is ideal.
- Free of diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Normal kidney function.
- Nonsmoker, or be willing to stop smoking.

What if I have more than one donor?

You may have more than one family member or friend wishing to be evaluated as a potential kidney donor at one time. All individuals interested in being considered as a living kidney donor are encouraged to contact the Living Donor Program. Every potential living donor for you will be considered for evaluation by the transplant team.

Please remember – great care and attention are taken to insure that your
family and friends are not subject to unusual risk. This may include the decision by the transplant team not to accept their offer of kidney donation to you.

**Are there reasons interested family members or friends cannot donate?**

Kidney donation is a major surgery. There is always risk when a person undergoes major surgery. Only a person in optimal health, free of diabetes and high blood pressure, and with normal functioning kidneys will be evaluated as a potential kidney donor.

The medical screening for potential kidney donors takes about 3 to 6 months. This medical screening process is to verify that the potential donor is in good health. At several points during the medical screening process, the potential donor’s chart will be reviewed. The transplant team may decide not to accept your family member or friend’s offer of kidney donation based on medical screening tests.

**What if my donor is healthy but cannot donate to me?**

If your potential living donors cannot donate to you because of either a positive cross-match or incompatible blood types, you might want to learn more about
University of Washington Medical Center’s **Donor Exchange Program.** This program matches recipient/donor pairs.

If you cannot receive a kidney from your donor because you are “highly sensitized,” UWMC has a program which uses medication and plasmapheresis protocols to reduce the antibody levels of the sensitized recipient. Refer to chapter on tissue matching. You may wish to talk with your transplant coordinator about this program.

**What about organ donation from the general public?**

Today, we are recognizing individuals who do not have any emotional or blood relation to any recipient but have a sincere desire to be a living kidney donor. These individuals are called **non-directed altruistic kidney donors.**

UWMC has an active non-directed altruistic donor program. Non-directed altruistic donors have donated to individuals on our center’s waiting list.

No special forms or additional requirements are needed if you want to be considered for a non-directed altruistic kidney offer. When there is a non-directed altruistic donor, all active recipients on our center’s list are eligible.
What is the donor evaluation process?

- The **first step** in the process is for interested family and friends to contact the Living Donor Program (LDP) at 206-598-3627.

- Preliminary information from your potential living donors is taken and the process is explained.

- A donor information packet with a list of initial medical information required will be sent to those interested. These forms need to be completed and returned with all of the medical information requested.

- We request this initial medical information on the potential donor right at the beginning. However, the recipient must be medically and financially cleared for transplant before any potential living donor can start the evaluation process.

- All medical evaluation testing for potential living donors must be approved by the Living Donor Program.
Will I know how my donor is doing?

All potential living donor evaluations are confidential. Federal and state law requires us to keep all medical records confidential, so no information about your donor’s evaluation can be given to you or your nephrologist by the transplant team. Your donor may or may not choose to keep you updated about the evaluation process.

What do I need to know about payment for living donor evaluations?

- The costs for obtaining the initial medical information are not covered by the Living Donor Program. The initial health history and physical exam required should be covered by the annual physical allowance of the potential living donor’s medical insurance policy. If your family member or friend does not have medical insurance, they should call the Living Donor Program Coordinator.
• Only those expenses incurred for pre-approved tests and labs directed by the Living Donor Program Coordinator can be submitted for payment.

• Payment of a potential living kidney donor’s medical expenses is limited to tests that are directly related to the required medical work-up. If the testing uncovers medical problems that need further evaluation or treatment, the Living Donor Program will not cover those costs.

• The medical expenses for the evaluation testing, surgery and hospital stay for the potential living kidney donor are the responsibility of the recipient’s insurance.

    Most recipients have insurance coverage that will pay these donor expenses. If you are not sure if your insurance will cover this, contact your insurance company or UWMC Patient Revenue Manager.

**What about after donation?**

The long-term follow-up of all kidney donors has shown no difference in their general health and length of life than that of the general population. After donation, the remaining kidney will grow to compensate for the donor’s removed kidney.
To learn more about living kidney donation, the Donor Exchange Program or non-directed altruistic donation, call The Living Donor Program at 206-598-3627 or 800-669-8962.
Notes
Notes
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your transplant coordinator during business hours.

Transplant Services
206-598-8881