

# Talking to Others About Your Condition

*A living donor can be your best possible outcome*



Waiting for a deceased kidney donor can be a stressful process that lasts years. A living donor offers you the best chance for a successful outcome, but the idea of asking someone to give you a kidney is daunting.

Many people find it incredibly difficult to bring up the subject of living donation even with their closest loved ones. They rightfully have several worries and fears, such as:

- I can't ask anyone to live life with just one kidney. What if my donor gets kidney disease?
- I don't want someone to take on medical bills and miss a lot of work to recover from surgery.
- I don't like to ask for help to solve my personal problems.
- I am afraid everyone will say no.

We've found many family and friends want to become a living donor after they learn more about their loved one's disease and how living donation works. (See "The Facts About Living Donation" for more information.) Donating a kidney to someone in need is truly giving that person a second chance at life. Many living donors will tell you they were forever changed for the better because they gave this ultimate gift, and they'd happily do it again.

Even if you never get comfortable enough to ask someone outright to be your donor, the very act of sharing details about your disease and the facts of living donation will increase awareness. Your family and friends will go on to share your story with others, increasing awareness of living donation and potential helping others on the waiting list. You may find someone you love or even a stranger will volunteer to be your donor.

## The Facts About Living Donation

- Healthy people can lead a full, happy life with only one kidney.
- Your potential donor will have a completely separate health care team looking out for their best interests.
- All donors are given thorough medical evaluations to make sure they are physically able and emotionally ready to become a donor.
- There are always risks with this surgery, and the donor's care team will discuss them thoroughly before a donor commits to the surgery.
- Most donor surgery is done laparoscopically, or through tiny incisions. This means a shorter recovery period, usually about two weeks.
- The recipient's insurance covers the cost of the donor's evaluation and surgery. Your donor may be eligible for assistance from the National Living Donor Assistance Program.
- Donors may be eligible for sick leave, state disability, and the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- Your medical information is not shared with your donor, nor is your donor's medical information shared with you.



## Prep yourself

Before you talk to others about your need for a kidney, you'll want to educate yourself about living donation. Your knowledge will help you better answer questions about the transplant process. Plus, the more you know about your condition and options, the more comfortable you will feel talking about living donation with others.

Start with those closest to you. Your family and closest friends likely already know much of what you're going through, and you can build confidence. You can practice the best ways to educate others about living donation.

Use these 5 tips:

1. **Speak from your heart.** Talk to others when you feel relaxed and natural. Encourage questions, and give them the time to process what you've said.
2. **Show the big picture.** Talk about how the nation's kidney shortage affects the tens of thousands of people in life-or-death situations just waiting for a donor.
3. **Remain hopeful.** Share how transplant is a better option than dialysis. Focus on living donation and how these transplants offer an even longer life and better outcome than deceased kidney donation or dialysis.
4. **Get social.** Use Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets to build awareness about living donation.
5. **Encourage action.** Offer links to reliable websites such as the National Kidney Foundation ([kidney.org](http://kidney.org)) and Saint Luke's Health System ([saintlukeskc.org/kidney-transplant](http://saintlukeskc.org/kidney-transplant)).

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 **Saint Luke's**  
HEALTH SYSTEM

