

Why Become a Living Kidney Donor?

A living donor makes all the difference in helping a patient receive a life-saving kidney. Relatives, loved ones, friends, and people who wish to remain anonymous may serve as living donors.

Urgent need for kidney donors

90,000

Americans are waiting for kidney transplants.

More than 10% live in the San Francisco Bay Area¹



A patient might spend **up to 10 years** on dialysis while waiting³

Average wait for a kidney from a deceased donor in California is **5 – 8 years**



35%
Latinx

16%
Asians and Pacific Islanders

14%
Black Americans

Types of living donors



Directed

Family members and friends



Indirect

Donors in a “chain donation.” The donated kidney is given to another recipient in exchange for a compatible kidney donated to their loved one.

More than one pair of living donors and recipients may be linked in a donation chain to receive matching organs.



Non-directed

Donors without an intended recipient, whom they know personally, resulting in more chain donations.

People of color are more likely to experience kidney failure.⁴

Black Americans are **3 times more likely** than white Americans



Latinx are **1.3 times more likely** than non-Latinx



After you donate a kidney

Your **1** remaining kidney will compensate and grow so you can live a normal life.



Donors usually stay in the hospital for **2 days** after surgery. Most donors can return to normal activities **within 6 weeks**.

Learn more at stanfordhealthcare.org/donatekidney

¹ OPTN Organ Procurement Transplant Network, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/>

² “Facts About Organ and Tissue Donation in California,” OneLegacy, accessed March 22, 2022, https://www.onelegacy.org/docs/DLC607_FactsAboutDonation_071009.pdf

³ “Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program,” Stanford Health Care, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-clinics/kidney-transplant-program.html>

⁴ “NKF Highlights Disparities During National Kidney Month,” National Kidney Foundation, accessed May 27, 2022, <https://www.kidney.org/news/nkf-highlights-disparities-urges-people-to-know-their-risk-during-national-kidney-month>

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Frequently Asked Questions

How risky is living donor surgery?

The surgery to donate a kidney is generally safe; the risk of death is very low at 3 in 10,000. Find more information about risks on the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) website.⁵

Can adults over age 50 donate?

Yes. Some people have donated in their late 60s. All potential living donors undergo a thorough medical evaluation to determine if donation is safe.

What if I am not a match for the person I want to donate a kidney to?

If you are not a match, you can become part of a “donation chain” whereby you donate your kidney to another recipient in exchange for a compatible kidney for your loved one. A donation chain results in two or more transplants, including one for your family member or friend and another for a compatible recipient of your kidney.⁶

Do my faith and traditions permit organ donation?

Many religions view organ donation as an act of kindness or a matter of individual conscience. If you have questions or concerns, consult your spiritual advisor.

Who is qualified to become a living donor?

Living donors must be in good health. All potential living donors undergo a comprehensive medical evaluation to determine whether donation is safe for both recipient and donor. We welcome potential living donors of all races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations.

Where can I learn about living donors' experiences?

Find donor and patient stories in the UNOS Transplant Living community at transplantliving.org/community, donatelife.net/stories, and donatelifecalifornia.org.

Does Stanford Health Care offer information and support for living donors?

Our social workers and team facilitate peer-to-peer appointments for potential donors who have questions and need support. Independent donor advocates represent the donor's rights and provide support from the moment the donor contacts our program to after donation. Staff interpreters are available in person, by phone, and by video in the most requested languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, American Sign Language (ASL), Farsi/Dari, and Korean.

How can I learn more?

- Whether or not you are sure you want to become a living donor, the first step is to complete our living donor interest survey—stanfordhealthcare.org/donatekidney—so our team can begin to determine your eligibility, speak with you, and provide more information.
- If you have questions about becoming a living donor, call our living donor team: **650-725-9891**
- Visit stanfordhealthcare.org/livingdonor

⁵ “Pros and Cons for a Living Donor,” UNOS Transplant Living, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://transplantliving.org/kidney/pros-and-cons-for-a-living-donor/>

⁶ “Kidney Donor Chains,” Kidney Transplant, <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-treatments/k/kidney-transplant-surgery/types/chain-donation.html>