

## Fact sheet

1

# Deciding to be a living kidney donor

A kidney transplant can help to improve the life of someone with kidney failure and improve their health. They can have a more active life, and will no longer need dialysis.

You may have a relative or friend who has kidney failure and you are thinking about becoming a living kidney donor. You might find the decision to donate a kidney easy or very difficult.

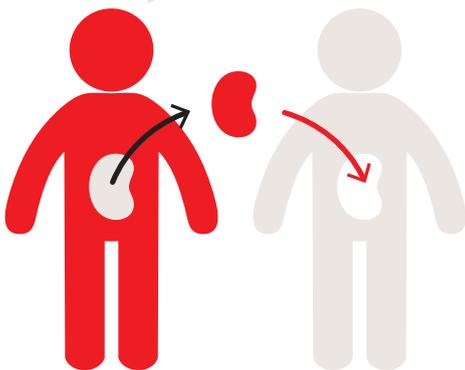
Whatever you choose - the decision is entirely yours. The information in this fact sheet may help you with this decision.

For more information you can also read the *Live Kidney Donation* fact sheet, which explains the living kidney donation process in more detail.

## Am I emotionally ready?

You may be excited about becoming a live donor or worried about being asked to donate a kidney. Either way, these are some questions to think about:

Call 1800 454 363  
to speak with someone  
who has been a  
live donor



- What do you think about organ donation in general?
  - What effect could donation have on your relationship with your relative or friend?
  - Do you expect some sort of reward or emotional 'pay-back' for donating?
  - What will you do if your recipient wants to express their thanks in a way that you are not expecting?
  - How do you think you will react if your recipient doesn't 'look after' the transplanted kidney in the way you expect? For example if they smoke, don't take their medication properly or drink too much alcohol?
  - Why do you want/not want to donate a kidney?
  - Do you feel you can make an informed choice about being a living kidney donor? Do you need more time or information?
  - How would you feel if the kidney transplant is not successful?
  - Are there other people who could be donors? If so, how will the donor be chosen?
  - Do you have a 'support network' - family and friends - to help you through the donation process?
  - Will your current job/home situation allow you to have time off for testing, surgery and recovery?
  - How will you feel if the tests show you are not able to donate? Are you healthy enough to donate?
- You can change your mind about being a live donor right up to the moment of the operation. However, it is important to think through the issues carefully before offering to be a living kidney donor as changing your mind at a later stage may cause you anxiety.

## Am I physically ready?

You should have time to make sure you are fit enough for the operation. You can strengthen your cardiovascular (heart) system, boost your immune system and reduce your recovery time by following some simple steps:



Eat a balanced, healthy diet with plenty of vegetables and fruit and low levels of salt, saturated fat and sugar



Keep fit by doing at least 30 minutes of exercise each day



Maintain a healthy weight



Drink plenty of water



No smoking



Drink alcohol only in moderation

## Am I spiritually prepared?

Most religions will allow organ donation and believe that it is a personal decision. However, you may wish to talk with your spiritual adviser before making a decision.

## Am I comfortable with my decision?

If you are the only suitable donor for your family member or friend you could feel under a lot of pressure, especially if the kidney is needed urgently.

It is very important that your donation decision is the right decision for you. It can be helpful to talk with someone outside of your family or friendship circle, such as a counsellor or social worker from the kidney transplant unit.

## Will it cost me anything to be a living kidney donor?

You will not have to pay for any medical/hospital expenses, as you will be a patient in a public hospital.

You may be eligible for the Support for Living Organ Donors Program. This Program provides reimbursement to your employer for up to 9 weeks of leave (based on a 38 hour week) of leave, at an amount up to the National Minimum Wage. As of 1 July 2017, reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses (even for donors who are not employed) is also included in the Program. For more information or to register see the Department of Health page <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/leave-for-living-organ-donors> or call (02) 6289 5055.

You should also check if kidney donation affects your health insurance, income protection insurance or superannuation.

You can not be paid for donating your kidney.

## What are my rights as a living kidney donor?

You have a number of rights as a donor, including:

- The right to medical information about the donation process and its short term risks as well as information about the possible long term risks
- The right to information about the expected short term and long term success of the transplant for the recipient
- The right to independent medical advice
- The right to counselling to discuss the potential psychological (mental) and social consequences of your decision to donate and enough time to think about this information
- The right to decide not to donate

## Do I have enough information ?

You may want to find answers to these questions before making a decision:

- Do you know the positive effects that a transplant can have on a recipient's life?
- What is the chance of transplant success?
- Do you understand what is involved in living donation including the testing, your operation and recovery?
- Have you found out about the risks involved in being a living donor, both physical and emotional?

Information about living donation is available from a number of places. The kidney transplant team can provide a lot of answers and you can also do your own research. You might want to talk to someone who has donated or received a kidney, go to an education session, or read about it.

Kidney Health Australia has trained Peer Support volunteers that you can speak to - some have been living kidney donors and others have received a kidney from a friend or relative. Please contact the Kidney Health Australia Health Info Line (freecall) on 1800 454 363.

You can also get information from our fact sheets – *Live Kidney Donation* and *Life With A Single Kidney*.

Other helpful resources include:

- *Kidney Donation by Live Donors* available to download from the Resources Library at [www.kidney.org.au](http://www.kidney.org.au)
- *Making a Decision about Living Organ and Tissue Donation* published by the National Health and Medical Research Council, available to download at: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e70.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e70.pdf)
- If you would like more information about national organ and tissue donation, visit the DonateLife website at [www.donatelife.gov.au](http://www.donatelife.gov.au) or contact your local DonateLife office.



### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Make sure you have enough information to make your decision.
- Are you comfortable with your decision?
- Remember that the decision to donate is entirely yours and it important that it is the right decision for you.

## What does that word mean?

**Dialysis** - A treatment for kidney failure that removes waste products and excess fluid from the blood by filtering the blood through a special membrane.

**End Stage Kidney (Renal) Disease (ESKD)** - The stage of kidney disease when a person's kidneys have stopped working and treatment, such as

dialysis or a transplant, is needed to sustain life. Also referred to as End Stage Kidney (Renal) Failure (ESKF), kidney failure or stage 5 CKD.

**Immune system** - a collection of special cells and chemicals that fight infection-causing agents such as bacteria and viruses

**Living kidney donation** - Where a living person donates one of their kidneys to be transplanted to another person, usually a family member or close friend.

**Transplant** - Where an organ or tissue is removed from the body of one person (the donor) and put into the body of another person (the recipient).

For more information about kidney or urinary health, please contact our free call Kidney Health Information Service (KHIS) on 1800 454 363.

Or visit our website [kidney.org.au](http://kidney.org.au) to access free health literature.

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or health professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.



If you have a **hearing or speech impairment**, contact the National Relay Service on **1800 555 677** or **relayservice.com.au**

For all types of services ask for 1800 454 363