



National Kidney Foundation®

How to Make the Ask

If you need a kidney, just the thought of asking someone to consider donation can feel scary. Where do you start? How do you ask someone to be a living donor? This depends on your relationship with the people you are thinking of asking.

Sometimes family members or friends will offer to donate. But even if someone offers, many kidney patients find it hard to accept this generous gift. Other kidney patients don't even realize that someone they know could become a living donor. Here are some suggestions to help make it easier to ask people to consider donation, or to make others aware of your need.

1. Learn All You Can

The first step is to learn as much as you can about living kidney donation and transplant. This will help you explain it to your friends and family. You may want to let people know that there's no cure for kidney disease, and tell them about your options for treating your condition.

Sharing as many facts as you can, along with your thoughts about your condition and treatment options, is one way to open a conversation.

A friend or family member might be willing to help you talk to others about your needs... don't be afraid to ask! This may relieve some pressure of having to ask people directly. However, feeling free enough to discuss your need for a kidney in everyday conversations is important in getting the word out... and it will make people more comfortable asking you questions about your health.

When sharing your story and describing what it's like to live with kidney disease, be open and honest about your situation and your feelings about it.

2. Raise Awareness... Share Your Story!

Sharing your story is very important. You should speak from the heart, telling people as much as you can about kidney disease. If you are on dialysis, you could include details about what a typical week is like for you on dialysis, the complications caused by kidney disease, and why transplant is a better long-term option for you. Remember, no one will offer to help unless they understand the need.

In sharing your story, you might be fortunate enough to receive offers from potential living donors who are willing to be tested as a match. It may be difficult to even think about accepting such a big gift, but keep in mind potential donors are screened carefully to ensure that they are healthy enough to donate and are doing it for the right reasons.

If there are no potential donors within your family or friends, you should consider widening your search. Think about your relationship to your community. Do you belong to a religious organization or community center? Would your employer help (sending a company-wide email, for instance, to let people know you're waiting for a transplant)? People have been known to find a living donor where they least expected it, such as a high school reunion or school event. You never know when you might cross paths with someone who could be a match and be willing to donate to you!

3. Use Technology...

In today's world, we have the advantage of modern technology. From email to social media, it's easy to connect with people outside of your closest family and friends.

For example, you could send an email to all of your contacts sharing your story, and encourage them to forward to people they know to help spread the word.

Social media is another great tool that shouldn't be overlooked. You can write a message that tells your story and can be easily shared. Even if you do not find a potential donor, you are still raising awareness about kidney disease and the need for organ donors, which is an important message that needs to be heard.

4. But Be Cautious

Though it takes bravery to ask for a kidney on social media or in any public forum, at the same time, it can be scary to reveal very personal details about your life and health.

Be careful and use common sense. Ask your transplant center for advice. Don't put yourself in a vulnerable situation where someone can try and take advantage of your situation. The issue of buying and selling organs may come up. This practice has been illegal in the U.S. since 1984, when it was outlawed by the National Organ Transplant Act.

5. Handling Responses

Keep in mind that asking for a kidney takes courage and when someone doesn't offer or says no, you may feel disappointed. Remember, it is a big ask. This does not mean that the person does not love you or care about your circumstances. In all likelihood, the reasons why someone doesn't donate may have nothing to do with you. It just means that this may not be the right decision at the right time for them. You may find that it's challenging to move on, but it's important to focus on finding someone who is willing and ready to be your donor.

It can be equally challenging to accept when someone says yes. It can feel overwhelming to realize that your potential donor is willing to sacrifice a kidney for you. Be gracious and express your gratitude, regardless if it works out after testing is complete or not. Assume that the potential donor really does want to donate, and let your transplant center know you have someone willing to donate so testing can begin at the appropriate time.

**A CONVERSATION CAN
SAVE A LIFE.**

www.livingdonors.org