For more information

Gift of Life Donation Initiative
www.organdonor.gov

United Network For Organ Sharing
www.unos.org

Association of Organ Procurement Organizations
www.aopo.org

University Renal Research and Education Association
www.ustransplant.org

National Kidney Foundation
www.livingdonors.org

Help Avoid Mistakes in Your Surgery
www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/SpeakUp/

Health Care at the Crossroads: Strategies for Narrowing the Organ Donation Gap and Protecting Patients
www.jointcommission.org/PublicPolicy/organ_donation.htm

Joint Commission Transplant Center Certification Program
www.jointcommission.org/CertificationPrograms/TransplantCenterCertification/

The Joint Commission

SpeakUP™

Information for living organ donors

Every year nearly 6,000 Americans become living organ donors. Usually, they donate a kidney. But donors can also give a part of their liver, lung or pancreas. If you are thinking about becoming a living organ donor, this brochure gives you important questions to ask your health care team.

Can anyone be a donor?

No. Living organ donors must be healthy. They cannot have diseases like diabetes, cancer, and kidney, heart and blood disease. Also, the donor's blood type must match the recipient's. And, donors must be able to handle the stress of surgery and recovery.

Will you have medical tests?

Yes. Your health care team will do tests to see if you are healthy enough to be a donor. Tell them about your health history and any concerns you have.

Are there risks?

All surgeries have risks, including the risk of death. You could get an infection or another complication. Ask about the risks of your surgery.

Will you get the same kind of health care as the organ recipient?

Both you and the organ recipient should expect safe, quality care.

Is living organ donation always successful?

No. Sometimes, the recipient's body rejects the new organ. Or, the recipient may have complications. You can ask about the expected result of the surgery for the recipient, and the risks to him or her.

Can you change your mind?

Yes. You can change your mind at any time for any reason. Organ donation is a personal decision. No one can make the decision for you. You should not feel pressured to donate.

How do you get ready for the surgery?

- Ask your health insurance company if it will cover your care and any complications from the surgery. Ask if your premium or coverage will change as a result of your donation.
- Ask your life insurance company if your premium or coverage will change.
- Find out about the medical leave policy where you work. If you take time off with less or no pay, you will need to budget carefully.
- Ask the hospital to help connect you with someone who has donated an organ. This person will give you a better idea of what to expect.
- Ask someone you trust to be with you at the hospital. This person can make sure you get the care you need to feel comfortable and safe.

What happens after the surgery?

- If the surgery is out of town, make plans to get back home after you leave the hospital. Or, ask the hospital to help you find a place to recover until you can travel.
- If you live alone, have children or live with the organ recipient, find someone you trust who can care for you while you recover. You may be in pain or feel weak or tired. And pain pills can make you groggy.

What should you ask the doctor?

- Is organ donation the only solution for the recipient?
- What tests will be done to make sure you are healthy enough to be a donor?
- Does the hospital have a special unit and specially trained nurses to care for living organ donors?
- Has my surgeon done this operation before? How many times?
- What are the risks of the surgery?
- What medicines will you need to take? Are there side effects? Will you need to take medicines for a long time?
- What kind of follow-up care will you need? Who will oversee your follow-up care?
- How long will recovery take? Will it be difficult?
- Will you need physical therapy or any other kind of therapy?
- How will the organ donation affect your health in the future? What is your risk to develop organ failure after donation?
- When can you exercise? When can you get back to your regular routine? Are there any sports or other activities that you won't be able to do after donation? Will it affect your ability to do your job?
- Does the surgeon use the Joint Commission's Universal Protocol to Prevent Wrong Site, Wrong Procedure and Wrong Person Surgery™?

The goal of the Speak Up™ program is to help patients become more informed and involved in their health care.