



Finding a Living Kidney Donor: A Guidebook for Donor Champions

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT CENTER

About this Guidebook

For people who need a kidney transplant, navigating and managing their health as well as asking friends, co-workers, community members and family to consider donating their kidney can be a daunting and uncomfortable task. We encourage our patients to identify a “Donor Champion,” someone who is willing to educate others about the patient’s condition and about transplant options to encourage living donation.

This guidebook will provide you with tools and information about living kidney donor transplants. It explains how the process works and highlights the important role of advocating for your loved one in this life-saving journey.

Benefits of a Living Donor Champion

A Donor Champion can be a friend, family member, co-worker, or anyone able to offer emotional support to a patient on the transplant waiting list. With the support of a Donor Champion, the person awaiting a transplant can focus on their health and well-being to ensure they are optimized and ready for a transplant while the Donor Champion focuses on the search for a living kidney donor.



STEP 1

Understanding the Why

When a loved one is waiting for a transplant, every moment matters. While many people will offer their support, it is the Donor Champion who plays one of the most essential roles. Donor Champions take the lead on finding potential living donors and spreading awareness of your loved one’s need for a kidney.

Responsibilities as a Donor Champion may include:

- **Raising awareness** about living donation and sharing the donor registration link whenever possible
- Providing emotional **support and encouragement** to the person waiting for a transplant
- Reaching out to **as many people as needed** to help find a living donor
- Offering **guidance and motivation** throughout the entire process

The role of Donor Champion is an important part of the recipient’s journey to find a living kidney donor. You will provide emotional support and encouragement for the recipient throughout the entire transplant journey and take the lead on finding potential living donors. Donor Champions offer hope and help ease the burden of finding a living kidney donor.

CONTENTS IN THIS GUIDEBOOK

Step 1: Understanding the Why	3
Step 2: Knowing the Facts	6
Step 3: Developing the Story	19
Step 4: Getting the Word Out	40
Resources	45

Having a Donor Champion is important because:

- People who have a Donor Champion have a **better chance** of receiving a living donor kidney transplant.
- The person in need of a transplant often has a long list of evaluation testing to complete. Having a Donor Champion allows them to **focus on their testing and their health**.
- Every year, thousands of people are removed from the waiting list because they have **become too sick** to make it through to transplant.
- People who have kidney disease are often hesitant to talk about their need for a transplant. Champions help **break down barriers for the recipient** such as fear of sharing their need for a transplant or discomfort of discussing such a sensitive subject.
- This is an emotionally taxing time for the person in need of a transplant, which can lead to a feeling that they are being too much of a burden on everyone. As the Donor Champion, it's important to **reassure your loved one** that it's **a challenge worth overcoming**.



Your task as the Donor Champion will be to spread the word as far as you can and to reach as many eyes, ears, and, above all, hearts as possible. You'll do this in many ways.

From word-of-mouth to social media, and everything in between, the more people who hear about your loved one's need, the sooner a suitable donor can be found. The sooner a living donor transplant takes place, the greater the potential for a better health outcome for them.

To accomplish all of this, it will be helpful to fully understand the patient's particular health situation. We will get into more details later in this guidebook.

It will also require you to keep an open mind, as an offer from a potential donor could come when you least expect it. On the other hand, you may also need to be patient, as a potential donor might not immediately come forward.

Supporting someone in need as a Donor Champion can be challenging, and it's important to be ready to fully dedicate yourself to the journey. However, this commitment can have a deeply positive outcome, not only on the life you're helping to save, but on your own as well.

As a Donor Champion, you are NOT alone! There are plenty of people who can help you.

- Find some **Champion Partners!** These are family or friends who volunteer their time and effort to help you share your loved one's story.
- The Living Donor **Transplant Team** is always available to answer questions or help you navigate steps in the journey, issues that may arise, or difficult conversations. Our team is here to help encourage you along the way.
- Collaborate with the **patient and/or their caregiver** to develop their personal transplant story.

How to Get Started

A good place to start is by making sure you've assembled all the information you will need to share to find a living kidney donor. This will include:

- General facts and information about living kidney donation
- Your loved one's story and why they need help
- Photos of your loved one in good health
- A reliable contact list

Let's get started!





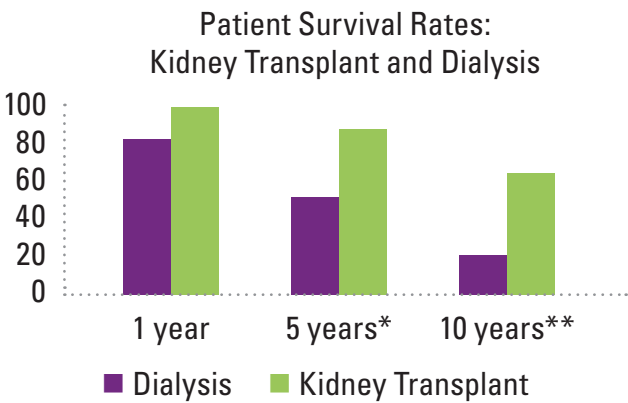
STEP 2

Knowing the Facts

As a Donor Champion, it’s important to be educated about transplantation and living kidney donation. You will need to be able to answer questions that potential donors may have. Let’s get into it!

Facts about Dialysis and Kidney Transplant

The two treatment options for patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) are dialysis and kidney transplant. However, patients who receive a kidney transplant tend to have better outcomes and live longer than those who remain on long-term dialysis. As you can see with the green bars to the right, patients have a better chance of long-term survival with a kidney transplant than patients on dialysis (purple bars).



*Ferreira, E.d., Moreira, T.R., da Silva, R.G. *et al.* Survival and analysis of predictors of mortality in patients undergoing replacement renal therapy: a 20-year cohort. *BMC Nephrol* 21, 502 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12882-020-02135-7>

**United States Renal Data System. 2022 *USRDS Annual Data Report: Epidemiology of kidney disease in the United States*. National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Bethesda, MD, 2022.

Long-Term Dialysis

Long-term dialysis can be life-sustaining, but it does come with a range of potential complications—some due to the treatment itself, others due to ongoing kidney failure. Here are some of the complications of long-term dialysis that can be **avoided** by receiving a kidney transplant:

- Vascular access issues (infections, blood clots, problems with blood vessels)
- Cardiac complications (heart failure, arrhythmias, hardening of the arteries)
- Fluid and electrolyte imbalances (fluid overload, high potassium and phosphate levels)
- Bone and mineral disease (due to imbalances in calcium, vitamin D, and phosphorus)
- Neurologic issues (peripheral neuropathy like tingling, burning, or loss of sensation in fingers, toes, or limbs)
- Anemia and fatigue (limits quality of life)
- Risk for infection (both from dialysis access site and from immune dysfunction)
- Psychological effects (anxiety, depression, poor quality of life)

Here’s a quick chart to summarize kidney transplant and long-term dialysis:

Benefit	Kidney Transplant	Dialysis
Survival	Higher	Lower (especially long-term)
Energy	Much improved	Lower (especially long-term)
Diet/fluid restrictions	Fewer	Very strict
Daily life	Flexible	Time consuming
Pregnancy outcomes	Safer	High risk
Mental health	Often improves	Depression often declines
Long-term costs	Lower over time	Higher cumulative

The Difference Between Living Kidney Donation and Deceased Donation

Many people are familiar with donation after death, but not many are familiar with living donation. For kidney transplant recipients, those who receive a kidney from a living donor tend to have better outcomes and the kidney tends to last longer than those who receive a transplant from a deceased donor. Additionally, once a living donor is approved, the transplant surgery can be scheduled, making the wait time much shorter.

Kidney from LIVING Kidney Donor	Kidney from DECEASED Kidney Donor
Lasts 15–20 years on average	Lasts 10–15 years on average
Shorter wait times (a few months)	Wait time average is 3–5 years
Surgery is scheduled in advance with plenty of time to plan	Surgery happens quickly, within hours of phone notification

Most people think they can only donate an organ after they’ve died. While you can register to be an organ or tissue donor (visit [DonateLife.net](#)), you can also donate a kidney as a living donor. Receiving a kidney from a living donor increases the overall existing organ supply, helping to save more men, women and children who are currently waiting for lifesaving transplants. By someone receiving a living donor kidney transplant, their name is taken off the national waitlist, making it shorter for those waiting on a deceased donor kidney transplant.

Different Types of Living Kidney Donation

You may be surprised to learn that there are several different types of living kidney donation!

Directed Donation

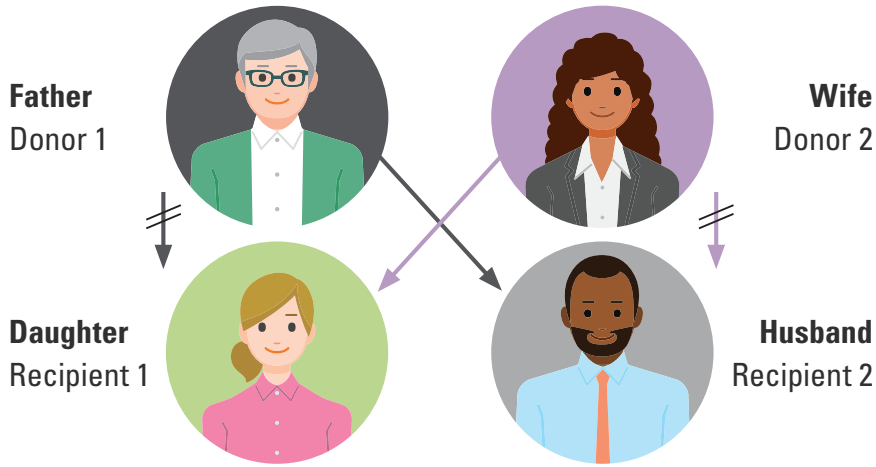
The donor’s kidney would be given directly to their intended recipient. The donor is a blood type match and is compatible with the recipient. The donor and the recipient would have surgery at the same time at our facility in separate operating rooms. Donors do not have to be related to the recipient to donate. In fact, most of our donors are not related to their recipient.

Non-Directed Donation

Sometimes, living kidney donors call the Kidney Transplant Center and want to donate a kidney but they do not know of anyone in need. This is commonly known as “anonymous donation” or in the transplant world, non-directed donation.

Paired Donation

Sometimes, a living kidney donor is not a great match for their intended recipient. This can be due to compatibility, age, or size differences. At Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center, we partner with the National Kidney Registry (NKR) to do a paired exchange.



In this example, a father wants to donate to his daughter, but they are not a match. A wife wants to donate to her husband, but they are not a match. In a paired exchange, recipients are swapped. So the father would donate to the husband and the wife would donate to the daughter. This swap can occur locally or across the country! We will discuss more about options with the National Kidney Registry on page 16.

Benefits of Living Kidney Donation

There are benefits for both the recipient and the donor!

Benefits for the Recipient

- Surgery is performed before the recipient’s condition worsens any further. This **improves their odds** of long-term recovery and longevity.
- Patients who receive a living donor kidney transplant are able to come off dialysis sooner or **eliminate need to start dialysis** altogether.
- Most importantly, recipients get their life back. They are able to **live a normal life again** by traveling, getting back to work, and having more opportunities, energy, and flexibility to do the things they enjoy!
- Patients who receive a living donor kidney transplant have a **higher success rate**, both short and long-term.
- With a living donor, the transplant can be scheduled at a time when both the recipient and donor are in the **best possible health**.
- The patient will experience more energy, **fewer dietary restrictions**, and a more active lifestyle after transplant.

Benefits for the Living Kidney Donor

- Donating a kidney provides the opportunity to **save a life!**
- The donor feels that he or she has **contributed to the recipient's life**—and the lives of the recipient's loved ones—in a very meaningful and lifelong way.
- Many donors feel an **increased sense of purpose**, increased happiness and self-esteem, and strengthened relationships.
- Donors have to undergo extensive **medical evaluations** to ensure they're healthy, which can lead to improved health awareness.
- After donation, donors often become more conscious about **healthy lifestyles** to protect their remaining kidney.
- A donor's act can **motivate others** to consider donation or become involved in raising awareness or health advocacy.
- Most living kidney donors **continue to live a healthy, active life** with one kidney.



Requirements for Living Kidney Donation

In general, living kidney donors must be healthy to donate. Our team will do an **extensive medical evaluation** to ensure they are healthy enough and that they can live the remainder of their life with one kidney.

There are a few individuals who should not consider living kidney donation. Those are people with kidney disease, heart disease, diabetes, or an active cancer diagnosis.

Anyone without one of the health concerns above can be considered for living kidney donation!

We encourage ANYONE interested in donation to call the **Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center Donor Team** at 616-685-6899 rather than ruling themselves out.

The Surgical Procedure

When talking to potential living kidney donors about donation, you may get asked a lot of questions about the surgery. It will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the following answers.

Q: How long does the surgery take?

A: The surgery itself is between 3 and 4 hours. Each surgery is different, but the donor's family members will be kept updated on surgery progress. After the surgery is completed, the donor will be taken to the recovery room where they will spend about an hour. Once out of recovery, they can see their family members or loved ones again.

Q: How long is the incision and how is it closed?

A: The size of the incision for a **living kidney donor** depends on the surgical method used, but here's a general idea:

- **Laparoscopic Surgery (most common)**
 - Small incisions: 3–4 tiny incisions are made for surgical tools and a camera
 - One slightly larger incision: Usually about 2–4 inches in the lower abdomen or near the belly button to remove the kidney
 - Incisions are closed with internal sutures that dissolve, and the outer portion of the incisions are sealed with surgical glue
- **Robotic Surgery (the newest technique)**
 - Small incisions: 3–4 tiny incisions are made for surgical tools and a camera; these are so small, they are just covered with a band-aid after surgery
 - One slightly larger incision: Usually about 2–4 inches in the lower abdomen below the pant line, which is a more preferred cosmetic approach to remove the kidney
 - Incisions are closed with internal sutures that dissolve and the outer portion of the incisions are sealed with surgical glue

Q: How long will I be in the hospital as a living kidney donor?

A: Most donors spend one or two nights in the hospital after donating a kidney.

Q: How long is the recovery time for a living kidney donor?

A: Initial recovery at home is typically 2–4 weeks. For full recovery, most donors are back to normal activities after 6–8 weeks.

Q: How long will I be off work after donating a kidney?

A: Most living kidney donors return to work in 3–6 weeks, depending on their surgery and the type of work that they do.

Q: What are the restrictions after living kidney donation?

A: There are both short-term and long-term restrictions after donating a kidney. These are discussed with each donor during their donor evaluation. Each patient is unique and will have a unique recovery course, but in general:

- **Short-term restrictions (6–8 weeks)** are mostly for healing purposes and to avoid complications after surgery.
 - No heavy lifting (typically nothing over 10–15 lbs)
 - No vigorous exercise or abdominal strain (sit-ups, running, contact sports)
 - Driving restrictions until off narcotics
 - Limit alcohol while on pain medications
 - No NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen)—they can harm the remaining kidney
- **Long-term restrictions and recommendations**
 - Avoid NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen)—they can harm the remaining kidney
 - Avoid high-protein diets
 - No contact sports (like football, martial arts)—avoiding injury to the remaining kidney
 - Annual checkups to monitor blood pressure and kidney function
 - Stay well-hydrated—this is important with one kidney
- **What living kidney donors CAN do:**
 - Live a normal life with just one kidney!
 - Exercise regularly after healing period!
 - Have children safely (after medical clearance)!

Q: What are the risks of donating a kidney?

A: There are both risks during surgery and long-term risks for living kidney donors. These are discussed with each donor during their donor evaluation.

- **Short-term risks (risks related to surgery)**
 - Pain, infection, or bleeding
 - Reaction to anesthesia
 - Blood clots
 - Hernia
 - Testicular swelling in males

- **Long-term risks (risks after surgery)**

- Loss of kidney function—you will be living with one kidney, so you have less backup/reserve if it's ever injured or develops issues
- Slight increase in risk of high blood pressure
- Slight increase in proteinuria (protein in urine)
- Slight increased lifetime risk of chronic kidney disease (though still lower than average for the general population)
- For female donors of childbearing age, there is a slightly increased risk in developing preeclampsia (our providers will discuss this in depth with applicable donors)

Myths and Facts about Living Kidney Donation

There are so many myths about organ donation and transplant. Here's some of the most common ones. Read up so you can be a myth buster!

Myth: Donating a kidney shortens your lifespan.

FACT: Most living kidney donors go on to live normal, healthy lives. Studies show that donating a kidney does **not significantly reduce life expectancy** when compared to the general population. Donors are carefully screened to ensure they're healthy enough for the procedure.

Myth: You can't live a normal life with one kidney.

FACT: A single kidney can effectively perform the job of two. After donation, most people resume their regular activities, including work, exercise, and travel, within a few weeks.

Myth: Kidney donation is extremely risky.

FACT: All surgery carries some risk but **living kidney donation is generally very safe**. The risk of serious complications is low, especially when performed at experienced transplant centers. Long-term health risks are also minimal for properly selected donors.

Myth: Donors must match the recipient's blood type exactly.

FACT: While compatibility helps, there are paired kidney exchange programs like the National Kidney Registry to enable donation even when blood types don't match.

Myth: Only young people can donate.

FACT: While donors must be healthy, there's **no strict age limit**. People in their 50s, 60s, and even early 70s have donated successfully, depending on their health status.

Myth: You can’t have children after donating a kidney.

FACT: Most people can still have children after donation. Women may face a slightly higher risk of high blood pressure during pregnancy, but it’s typically manageable with medical care. Our team will talk to female donors about this risk during their evaluation.

Myth: You have to be a blood relative to donate.

FACT: Donors can be friends, spouses, co-workers, or even strangers. Anonymous/non-directed donors (those who donate to anyone in need) are also increasingly common.

Myth: Kidney donation will lead to chronic illness or dialysis later in life.

FACT: There’s no evidence that kidney donors are more likely to develop kidney failure than the general population, provided they were healthy at the time of donation. In fact, the risk is only 1% of developing end-stage renal disease after donation.

Cost of Living Kidney Donation

For the **donor**, the **medical costs of donating a kidney are typically covered** by the recipient’s insurance. It is important to note that it is illegal for recipients to offer money to potential donors.

What is Usually Covered

- Basic testing to determine donor compatibility (occasionally, there is some testing that falls outside of what is covered, but your own insurance would be billed for this; you will know this ahead of time and can determine if you want to proceed with testing)
- Surgery and hospitalization for the donor
- Post-operative medical care related to the donation

The transplant center handles the billing, and the donor should not be responsible for these medical expenses.

What May *Not* Be Covered

Some **non-medical costs** related to donation are not always automatically covered, such as:

- **Travel and lodging** (especially if the donor lives far from the transplant center)
- **Lost wages** due to time off work during recovery
- **Childcare or eldercare** during the donor’s hospital stay and recovery
- **Follow-up care** beyond what the transplant program includes

A quick summary:

Expense	Typically Covered?	Notes
Medical testing, evaluation & required follow-up after donation	✔ Yes	Most covered by transplant center
Surgery & hospitalization	✔ Yes	Covered by recipient’s insurance
Post-op care (short-term)	✔ Yes	Usually included
Travel and lodging	? Sometimes	NLDAC/Donor Shield may help
Lost wages	? Sometimes	NLDAC/Donor Shield may help
Childcare/eldercare	? Sometimes	NLDAC/Donor Shield may help
Long-term follow-up care	? Sometimes	Some follow-up covered, but long-term may not be
Complications	✔ Yes	Based on recipient coverage at time of transplant; donor team will work closely with donor to assist

There are several options to cover the cost of non-covered expenses. The main two programs are **National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC)** and **Donor Shield**. They both cover wage reimbursement, dependent care, and travel and lodging for testing and surgery. The maximum amount reimbursed and eligibility requirements differ between the two programs.

In addition to these two programs, a donor can apply for **FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)** and short-term disability from their employer if these benefits are offered.

The Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center will discuss these options with donor candidates.



National Kidney Registry (NKR)

In 2020, Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center in Grand Rapids partnered with the world’s largest kidney exchange program, the National Kidney Registry (NKR). By partnering with NKR, we have been able to offer more options for living kidney donors and hard-to-match patients. Trinity Health Grand Rapids is the only adult kidney transplant center in Michigan to partner with NKR.

NKR is the exchange program used for all paired kidney exchanges (page 17). There are over 100 other kidney transplant centers that partner with NKR, making our pool of living kidney donors very large and opening up the best matching options for our patients. A donor and recipient do not need to be the same blood type. As long as someone is willing to donate on behalf of your loved one, we can work with NKR to find them a match that they are compatible with!

There are several benefits of NKR, for both recipients and living kidney donors! Their programs are designed to increase donor matches, protect donors, and improve outcomes for everyone in the transplant process. Here is a summary of the key benefits:

NKR Benefits for Living Donors

Donor Shield Program (Unmatched Protection)

A signature program that provides comprehensive protections and support for donors, including:

- Lost wage reimbursement (up to 4 weeks)
- Travel and lodging reimbursement
- Life insurance and disability insurance
- Legal support if needed post-donation
- Coverage for complications that may arise from the surgery (even years later)



Learn more at DonorShield.com

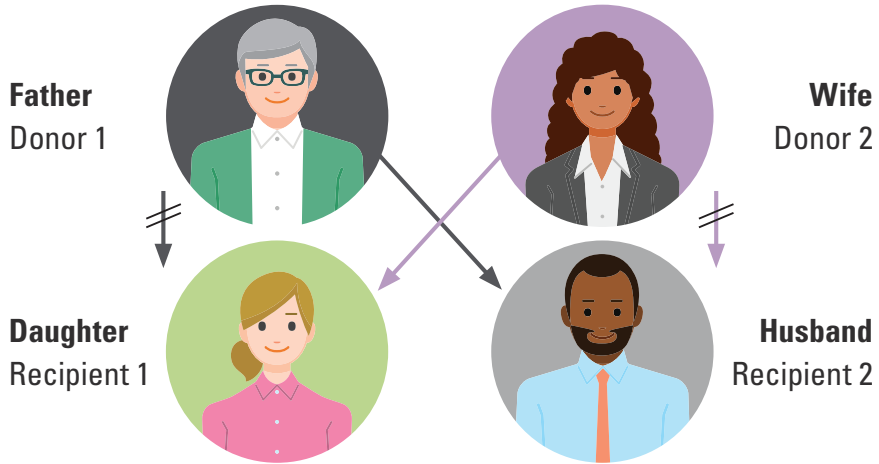
Advanced Donation Program (ADP)

This allows a donor to give a kidney before their intended recipient is ready or able to receive it. The recipient receives a voucher for a future transplant. This is great for:

- Donors who want to give but live far away or need to donate on a different schedule
- Parents or relatives of young children who may need a kidney later

Kidney Paired Donation (KPD)

If a donor isn’t a match for their intended recipient, NKR uses its national network to match them with another donor-recipient pair, forming a swap that enables both patients to get a compatible kidney. NKR has the largest paired exchange program in the US, increasing match potential significantly.



Post-Donation Follow-Up & Care

NKR tracks donor health and outcomes for 50 years after donation and ensures donors have access to ongoing support and care.

For Transplant Recipients

Faster Access to a Transplant

By participating in NKR’s exchange program, patients can often receive a transplant much sooner than waiting on the deceased donor list.

Better Matching for Highly Sensitized Patients

NKR’s large donor pool helps patients with high antibody levels (who are harder to match) find a compatible donor through their cross-matching tools.

Other Features

- Highly coordinated logistics to ship kidneys safely across the country
- Excellent outcomes: NKR kidneys have high success rates due to careful matching and donor screening
- Transplant center network: Over 100 leading centers across the U.S. participate

Microsite

The National Kidney Registry (NKR) Microsite Program is a free tool designed to help transplant candidates and their donor champions find a living kidney donor by creating a personalized web page (microsite) that shares their story and provides donor testing information. The use of a microsite will be discussed with each patient and their donor champion once the patient is placed on the national waiting list!

For more information, visit **KidneyRegistry.org** or talk to our Living Donor Team.

NKR Microsite Program Benefits

Makes Sharing Easy

Recipients and their advocates can share the microsite link via:

- Social media posts
- Emails or texts
- Printed flyers or cards
- Church bulletins, community boards, etc.

Direct Path to Donor Screening

Anyone interested in donating can click the “Start Screening” button and immediately begin the confidential NKR donor questionnaire. This goes directly to NKR for evaluation.

Fully Confidential for Donors

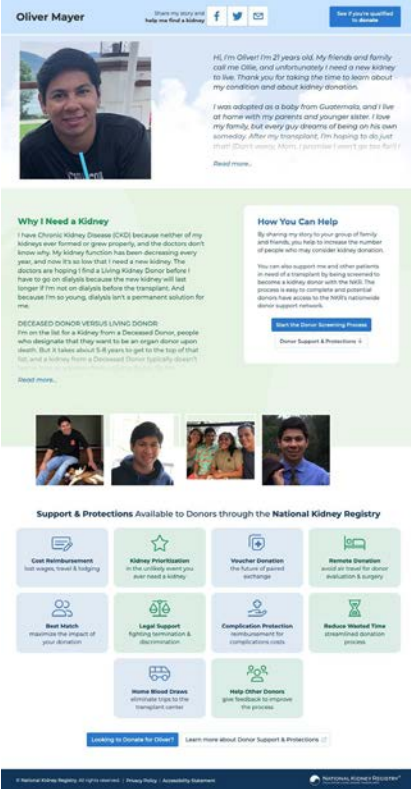
Potential donors can learn more and be screened **without notifying the recipient** unless they choose to—so there’s no pressure.

Tracks Donor Referrals

Recipients can see how many people have clicked and started the screening process (though the donor identities remain confidential unless a match is made).

Professional and Trustworthy

The site is part of the official National Kidney Registry, which gives it credibility and makes it easier for people to trust the process.



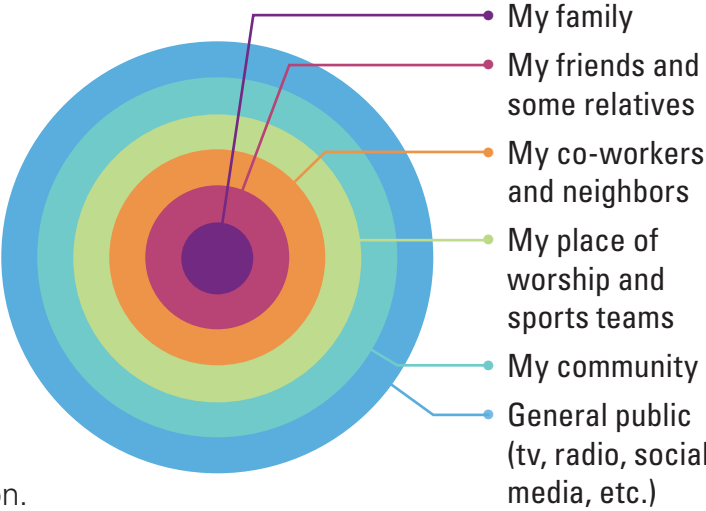
STEP 3 Developing the Story

This section of our guidebook will provide you with some worksheets to help start your brain-storming, track your ideas and progress, and help you have a successful search for a living kidney donor! Not all worksheets may be helpful or applicable for you—use what works best.

Circles of Connection

Let’s start by discussing the circles of connection. These circles of connection and support involve a group of people coming together to help promote and support the goals of a person in need of a kidney transplant.

When you think about your circles of connection, these are people who can help spread the word and people you could consider asking about their interest in donation.



YOUR Circles of Connection

Next, let’s brainstorm your and the recipient’s circles of connection. Who might consider donating? Who could help you spread the word? List as many individuals and groups you can think of. Think about your personal connections and connections of others. Talk to the kidney recipient and see if they can think of people to list as well! The more people that you can get the word out to, the better. Remember, even if they are not interested in donating, they may be able to help spread the word or share your recipient’s story!

Family	Distant Relatives
Friends	Neighbors
Places of Worship	Co-workers
Community Center	Sports Teams
Hobby Groups	Clubs or Organizations
School/Alumni Groups	General Public Outlets (print, tv, radio, billboards, etc.)
Places You Frequent (coffee shops, your favorite restaurant, etc.)	

Family	
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Address:	
Email:	Best method of contact:
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Email:	Best method of contact:

School/Alumni Groups	
Name:	Phone:
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Email:	Best method of contact:
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Places You Frequent (coffee shops, your favorite restaurant, etc.)

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

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Email:

Best method of contact:

General Public Outlets (print media, tv, radio, billboards, etc.)

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Best method of contact:

32

FINDING A LIVING KIDNEY DONOR

33

FINDING A LIVING KIDNEY DONOR

Developing the Story

Now that we know who we are going to reach out to, let’s develop the recipient’s story and why he or she needs our help. Developing the story is the key to your search for finding a living kidney donor. We encourage you to work with the recipient on this portion. It will be helpful to get their permission about what they’re comfortable sharing. You will want to develop two versions of the story—a longer one and a shorter one.

The shorter one is an “elevator speech” or “short pitch.” It’s a brief introduction that summarizes your message and a way to make a connection in a short time. Your longer story will be used to share in social media posts, emails, and the microsite. Your elevator speech will be used in brief interactions.

Start with the elevator speech or short pitch. Break it down into small pieces. You can write the elevator speech from the perspective of the person in need of a transplant or from your own perspective as the Donor Champion. You may want to have both versions on hand. The example in the purple box below is from the perspective of the person in need of a transplant.

- Introduce yourself
- Present the problem
- Present the solution
- Share your motivation
- How to help


Introduce Yourself


Present the Problem


Present the Solution


Share Your Motivation


How to Help

Here’s an Example of a Kidney Donation Elevator Speech

“Hi, I want to share something personal and important. I have end-stage kidney disease, and my best chance for a longer, healthier life is a kidney transplant from a living donor. Dialysis is keeping me going for now, but it's not a long-term solution—and a transplant could give me a new beginning.

You don’t have to be a match to help—just spreading the word could lead me to someone who is. If you’re open to learning more about living donation, I’d be so grateful. Thank you for taking a moment to listen—it means the world to me.”

It’s very easy to quickly edit this to be from the perspective of the Donor Champion! Simply replace “I have end-stage renal disease” with “My (friend/loved one/etc.) has end-stage renal disease” and then replace the other “I’s” with “she/he/they.”

Let’s Work on Your Elevator Speech

Introduce yourself:

Present the problem:

Present the solution:

Share your motivation:

How to help:

Now, Let’s Work on the Longer Story

As with the shorter version, it’s important to work with the person in need of a kidney transplant on developing this story. This longer story includes a bit more personal information, so you want to make sure they’re comfortable with the information that will be shared. Here are three main goals that you want to achieve when developing your story:

- Convey the situation the recipient is in
- Develop an emotional connection
- Describe how someone can help

The most important part of this story is for it to come from the heart. This helps you make a memorable connection with others, leading them to learn more and even possibly donate.

It’s best to write this longer story from the perspective of the person needing a kidney transplant rather than the perspective of the Donor Champion. “My name is John and I need a kidney transplant” rather than “My name is Bill and my friend John needs a kidney transplant.”

Here are Some Important Things to Include

1. Describe the recipient’s current condition and why they need a transplant.
2. Explain how kidney failure has affected them and how a transplant could positively impact their life. Include a few facts about why they are pursuing living donation (shorter waiting time, longer lasting kidneys, etc.).
3. Include unique details about them and their situation (interests, hobbies, family, pets, goals for future, job, etc.). This helps others relate to them more and helps the story to stand out.
4. Finally, let others know how they can help. This can be through sharing their story or by starting the process to be tested to be a potential living donor.
5. Include information on how donors can start the process if they are interested: recipient’s microsite link/QR code, Transplant Donor Team (616-685-6899) and Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center website (TrinityHealthMichigan.org/services/kidney-transplants/become-a-donor).



Some Things to NOT Include

1. **Blood type:** There is no need to be a compatible blood type anymore! Thanks to our paired donation program through NKR, someone can still donate on the recipient’s behalf and then they will receive a kidney they are a match with from another donor somewhere in the country!
2. **Personal contact information** (birthday, address, phone, personal email, family information, sensitive information or inappropriate photos). Please use the **Kidney Transplant Center contacts** instead. Keep all other personal information out of the story. You can use a shared generic email address created for the sole purpose of a search for a living donor (ex: SaveLucy@gmail.com). We will discuss this more later in Step 4. You can use a shared generic email address created for the sole purpose of searching for a living donor (example) or you can direct them straight to your recipient’s microsite if they have one.

If you are unsure of sharing something or not, it’s better to be cautious and not share it.

To help get you started, here’s an example of a longer patient story. You can use this as a template and tweak to be about your recipient! See the Resources section for more templates.

Looking for a Living Kidney Donor: A Personal Message

Hi everyone,

This isn’t an easy post to write, but it’s one I need to share—because it could truly save my life.

As some of you know, I have been diagnosed with **[end-stage kidney disease/chronic kidney disease]**. Right now, my kidneys can no longer do the job they’re supposed to, and I’m relying on **[dialysis/planning to start dialysis]** to survive. While I’m deeply grateful for this treatment, dialysis is incredibly hard on the body and not a long-term solution. It’s exhausting, time-consuming, and it comes with a lot of limitations.

Every week, I spend **[number] hours hooked up to a machine**, watching the world move on outside. It’s exhausting. I miss the simple things: waking up with energy, traveling without worry, even enjoying a full glass of water without restriction. Most of all, I miss feeling like myself.

Example continues on next page

Looking for a Living Kidney Donor: A Personal Message, continued

After talking with my medical team and family, I’ve decided to pursue a **kidney transplant**. The best outcomes, by far, come from **living donors**. That’s why I’m reaching out—not just to ask, but to share, educate, and maybe even inspire someone who might be willing to consider this incredibly generous act.

A living kidney donor can be a family member, a friend, or even someone I’ve never met—just someone healthy and willing to get tested. **You don’t have to be a match to help.** Hospitals can often match donors and recipients through paired exchange programs. Even just sharing this post could help connect me with someone who can give this gift.

Here are some important things to know about living donation:

- Donors can live a full, healthy life with one kidney
- Medical costs for the donor are typically covered by my transplant insurance
- The evaluation process is very thorough—to protect the donor’s health above all else
- Recovery time for most people is 4–6 weeks
- The donor doesn’t need to live in the same state or even be the same blood type, thanks to national kidney exchange programs

If you’re open to learning more about kidney donation, or know someone who might be, I’d love to talk. Or I can connect you with the transplant team for totally confidential info.

Above all, thank you for reading this and being part of my life. Just your support means everything—and you never know who might see this and be moved to act.

With gratitude,
[Your Name]

Feel free to message me with questions, or reach out to the transplant team at:
Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
616-685-6899
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Let’s Brainstorm Your Longer Story with These Prompts

Convey the situation the recipient is in. *What’s the current situation? Why are you reaching out?*

Develop an emotional connection. *How has kidney disease impacted your life? How could a transplant change that?*

Describe how someone can help. *Share your story, spread the word, consider getting tested, get more information, etc. Always provide the Kidney Transplant Center as a contact!*



STEP 4

Getting the Word Out

Keeping your audience engaged is key. The more emotionally connected people feel, the more likely they are to support and share your story. Stay upbeat, be yourself, and take a look at these ideas to keep your story alive and growing.

1. Social Media: Make it Personal and Shareable

- **Create a dedicated page or profile** (e.g., “A Kidney for [Name]”) where people can follow the story.
- **Use photos, videos and updates** to make it real—talk about daily life, dreams, and how donation could change everything.
- **Hashtags** like #KidneyDonorNeeded, #ShareYourSpare, or your own unique one can help your story spread.
- *Pro tip:* Pin your post, use Instagram Reels or TikToks for short emotional videos, and tag local news or influencers.

2. Written, Shareable and Visual Aids

- Place in community boards: churches, libraries, gyms, coffee shops or workplaces.
- Ask trusted friends or family to share it in their networks.
- Include a picture and a QR code that links to the Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center. There are several free QR code generators available online!
- Expand this and make business cards or pamphlets, too.
- Print yard signs, use sidewalk chalk—no idea is too small or silly!

3. Word of Mouth: Your Network is Bigger than You Think

- Tell everyone you trust. Friends, co-workers, your dentist, barista, your cousin’s yoga instructor—people are often willing to help or share. Refer back to your circles of connection in Section 3.
- Keep your elevator speech handy! This is when you’ll use it!
- Ask friends/family to **share your recipient’s story in their own words**. Sometimes the message hits harder when someone else says it.
- Create an easy to remember website to help reach people by email! Create something like SaveLucy@gmail.com to send out your electronic communication. Remember not to share personal contact information, so utilizing an email address specifically for this living donor search will help!

4. Create Wearable and Shareable Advocacy

- Shirts, hats or pins that say things like:
 - “Ask me about kidney donation”
 - “In need of a kidney. Can you help?”
 - “1 kidney. 2 lives. Be the one.”
 - “My friend/son/etc. needs a kidney. Can you help?”
- Add a QR code or web link to Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center. There are several free QR code generators available online!

5. Use Your Car (Really!)

- Place a decal, bumper sticker or magnetic sign on your car: “I need a kidney. Can you help?” or “My loved one needs a kidney. Can you help?” Be sure to include the Kidney Transplant Center contact info or website.
- Use window chalk to turn your car into a billboard on wheels!

6. Leverage Online Kidney Matching Platforms

- Work with the recipient to create a microsite with the National Kidney Registry! Once your loved one is approved and on the waitlist, our team will send them a link to set up a personal website. They will be given a coach to help them. They will also be given a personal link to their story and business cards to pass out.
- These connect potential donors to real people who need help.

7. Create a Website or Blog

- Share your recipient’s full story, FAQs about living donation, and links to the transplant center.
- Let people follow your journey—it builds connection and trust.
- If the recipient is technology-savvy and wants to create a blog about living with kidney disease and the search for a living kidney donor, go for it!

8. Get Media Coverage

- Local news stations, newspapers, or radio often love human-interest stories—especially about someone in the community.
- Write a compelling email pitch or press release.
- Try podcasts or blogs about health, organ donation, or human stories.

9. Ask Your Faith or Spiritual Community

- Many churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities are incredibly supportive and generous.
- Ask if you can speak or share a written message with the congregation.

10. Make It About Connection, Not Just Asking

- Host a “Kidney Donation Info Night” (virtually or in person)
- Offer to educate people, answer questions, etc.
- Always remember, “asking” can be hard, but sharing the story can be much easier!

BONUS TIP: When someone expresses interest—even just curiosity—follow up right away. Donating a kidney is a huge decision, and your warmth and openness can make all the difference.

Now that we have some ideas, what do you think you can act on?
How can you start getting the story out there?

Start with a few EASY ideas. *What could you do in just a few hours to share the story?*
Make a note!

Let’s move on to a few other GREAT ideas! *What are some ideas you’d like to do, but might take some more planning or time? Write them down!*

How about some harder, but BIG ideas! *What would you love to accomplish with the help of others or a team? Write down your ideas!*

My Action Plan

If it’s helpful, use this checklist to track your progress and keep organized! Or use the table below to make your own checklist and mark off when things are done!

- Brainstorm your circles of influence
- Collect contact information for your circles of influence
- Work with your loved one to develop your elevator speech
- Work with your loved one to develop the longer story
- Familiarize yourself with the information in Step 2 and be comfortable answering questions you may get (you can always reference this guide later on, too!)
- Brainstorm ways you can share the story and spread the word
- Start sharing the story and the search for a living kidney donor

Task	Done!	Notes



Resources

When Someone Says “Yes”

If someone expresses interest in considering living kidney donation, it’s an important moment to respond with care, clarity, and support. Here’s a step-by-step guide on what you can do to move the process forward:

1. Express Gratitude

First and foremost, express your sincere thanks and appreciation for their willingness to consider such a generous and life-changing act.

- “Thank you so much for your openness and willingness to consider this. It means more than I can express.”

2. Direct Them to the Transplant Team

Let them know that the next step is contacting the transplant center for more detailed information and to start the process. Provide contact information for the transplant team or center.

- “The next step would be for you to contact **Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center in Grand Rapids** to speak with a Living Donor Coordinator. They can answer all your specific questions and guide you through the process. Here’s the contact information:”

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team
Phone: 616-685-6899
Email: donor@trinity-health.org
Website: TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Let them know that they can also declare their interest from the Trinity Health website (link listed above).

3. Respect Their Time

Understand that this is a significant decision, and they may need time to think it over. Let them know there’s no rush and that you respect whatever decision they make.

- “I completely understand this is a big decision, so please take all the time you need. There’s no pressure — just know that I’m incredibly grateful for your willingness to even consider this.”

4. Respect Their PRIVACY

Understand that the prospective donor is not required to update anyone on their progress. The Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center is also not able to provide you (the Donor Champion) or your Champion Partners with any information about a donor’s evaluation.

- “For your privacy, no one on our donor search team is made aware of your progress or evaluation workup. We want to keep your medical information confidential, and we will not ask for updates.”



When Someone Says “No”

Hearing “no” when asking someone to consider living kidney donation can be disheartening—but it’s a common and understandable part of the process. Here’s what you can do next:

1. Respect Their Decision

Start by acknowledging their answer with grace. Donation is a deeply personal decision and saying no doesn’t mean they don’t care. It may be due to health concerns, fear, financial worries, or emotional readiness.

2. Keep the Conversation Open

Some people might initially say no out of fear or misinformation. Over time, as they learn more, they might reconsider. Leave the door open for future conversations, but never pressure anyone.

3. Ask if They Can Help

Just because they don’t want to donate doesn’t mean they can’t help in other ways! Ask the person if they’d be willing to help by sharing the story. Remember, they have their own circles of connection, so even them sharing the story on their personal social media page can get the word out to a new circle of people. If they’re passionate about helping, you can ask if they’d be interested in being a Champion Partner!

4. Don’t Give Up

Finding a living donor can take time. Rejections are difficult, but they’re part of the journey. Stay persistent, informed, and open to different paths—including changing your initial plan for sharing the story.

Keep in mind that some people will say yes to being worked up and then will not follow through on the evaluation requirements. Others will follow through on their evaluation but could potentially be ruled out for health reasons. It’s best to keep the search going until a donor is found, approved, and surgery is scheduled!



Conversation Starters

Starting a conversation about your need for a living kidney donor can feel intimidating, but having a few thoughtful, approachable openers can make it easier. Here are **conversation starters** you can adapt to different settings—whether in person, via phone, email, or social media:

Personal One-on-One Conversation Starters

These are good for friends, co-workers, or acquaintances:

- “Hey, I wanted to talk to you about something important. A close friend/family member of mine, [Name], is in kidney failure and needs a transplant. We’re hoping to find a living donor, and I thought you might be open to hearing more.”
- “You’ve always been such a kind and thoughtful person, and I wanted to ask if you’d consider learning more about living kidney donation. Someone I care about deeply is in need of one, and we’re doing everything we can to help them find a match.”
- “This might sound like a big thing—and it is—but I’m trying to help [Name] find a kidney donor. I’m not asking you to say yes, just to hear more and consider sharing the story.”

Social Media or Group Message Starters

Great for spreading awareness to a broader network:

- “A loved one of mine, [Name], is in urgent need of a kidney transplant. I’m acting as their Donor Champion—trying to help find a living donor. If you’re open to learning more or just sharing this post, it could make all the difference.”



- “This isn’t something I ever imagined doing, but someone I love needs a kidney to survive, and I’m helping them search for a living donor. If you’ve ever considered being a donor—or just want to learn more—I’d be so grateful.”
- “You may not know this, but there are thousands of people on the kidney transplant list—and my [friend/sibling/parent/etc.] is one of them. I’m helping them find a living donor. Please reach out if you’d be open to talking or sharing their story.”

For Community Settings (Flyers, Events, or Casual Conversations)

When speaking with someone you may not know well:

- “Hi, I’m helping someone close to me who needs a kidney transplant. We’re looking for a living donor and trying to spread awareness. Would you be willing to take a flyer or learn more?”
- “I’m part of a campaign to help my [friend/family member] find a living kidney donor. Just hearing the story or sharing it can help—you never know who might be a match.”

Quick Follow-Up or Leave-Behind Line

- “No pressure at all—just some information in case you’re curious or want to help spread the word.”

Social Media Post Examples

Bonus tip for posts:

- Include photos or videos: Posts with images or videos of the person in need or a quick explainer video about kidney donation tend to have more engagement.
- QR code/link: You can also share a QR code or link to the transplant center’s donation page for easy access to information. The easiest website for Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center is TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant.

Sample Social Media Post 1: General Appeal

☀️ Help Save a Life ☀️

A loved one of mine, [Name], is facing kidney failure and urgently needs a living kidney donor to survive. While they’re on the transplant list, the wait could take years—time they may not have.

I’m reaching out to you today to ask if you’d be open to learning more about what it takes to become a living kidney donor. It’s a big decision, but it can change someone’s life forever.

💡 What’s involved?

- Donors are thoroughly tested and supported.
- All medical expenses are covered.
- Donating a kidney is safe, and many donors go on to live a full, healthy life.

If you want to learn more or share [Name]’s story, please reach out to me or contact their transplant team directly.

Contact info:
Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Every share, every kind word, and every bit of awareness helps. Thank you for taking a moment to read this. 🙏

#KidneyDonor #LivingKidneyDonor #DonateLife #SaveALife #KidneyTransplant

Sample Social Media Post 2: Personal Story

❤️ A Life-Changing Gift ❤️

I’m writing this on behalf of someone I love dearly—[Name], who is currently battling kidney disease and urgently needs a living kidney donor. [Name] has always been there for others, and now, they need the help of someone who is willing to make the incredible gift of life by donating a kidney.

While waiting for a deceased donor kidney is an option, it could take years, and [Name] needs help sooner. If you or someone you know is healthy and open to exploring living donation, you can contact the transplant center below.

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

If you can’t donate, simply sharing this post or passing it along could help make all the difference. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for reading this and for being part of [Name]’s journey. 💙

#LivingDonor #KidneyDonation #HelpSaveALife #KidneyTransplant

Sample Social Media Post 3: Encouraging Sharing

💬 Please Help Spread the Word! 💬

I’m reaching out to my network for something important. My [friend/family member], [Name], urgently needs a kidney transplant. While they’re on the transplant list, the wait could be years, and we need help finding a living kidney donor.

If you or someone you know might be interested in learning more about the process of becoming a donor, I’d be so grateful. Even if you aren’t able to donate, sharing this post could reach the right person.

You can contact Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center at 616-685-6899 or TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant to learn more.

Every bit of support helps, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to read this.

#KidneyDonor #KidneyTransplant #LivingDonor #SaveALife #HelpSpreadTheWord

Sample Social Media Post 4: Kidney Donation Facts & Appeal

📢 Did You Know? 📢

A living kidney transplant offers the best chance for success, and it could save a life. My [friend/family member], [Name], is in need of a kidney transplant and is searching for a living donor. The wait on the national transplant list can be years long, and we're hoping to find a donor who can step forward sooner.

Living donation is safe, and it can change someone's life forever. The donation process includes a full medical evaluation to ensure the safety of the donor.

If you're open to learning more, here's how you can help:

1. Reach out to me for more details.
2. Call Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center at 616-685-6899.
3. Share this post with your network.

Every share is one step closer to finding a match. Thank you for your kindness and support. 🙏

#LivingKidneyDonor #KidneyTransplant #DonateLife #HopeForAHeart #LivingDonation

Sample Social Media Post 5: Holiday-Themed Appeal (For Holiday Season)

🎄 A Gift of Life this Holiday Season 🎄

This holiday season, I'm reaching out with a very special request: I'm helping my [friend/family member], [Name], find a living kidney donor. As [Name] battles kidney failure, the wait for a transplant can take years, but a living donor can shorten that wait and save a life.

If you've ever thought about organ donation or want to learn more, I would be so grateful if you'd consider being tested to see if you're a match. No pressure—just the possibility of giving the most life-changing gift.

You can contact Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center at 616-685-6899 to learn more.

Please share this post, even if you can't donate. Every share helps spread the word! Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season. 💙🌟

#GiftOfLife #LivingKidneyDonor #KidneyTransplant #HolidayHope #DonateLife

Letter and Story Templates

A Letter for EXTENDED FAMILY

Dear Family,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well. I'm writing to share something very personal and important that's been weighing heavily on my heart. As you may know, I've been living with kidney disease, and my condition has progressed to the point where I now need a kidney transplant to restore my health and give me the best chance for a longer, fuller life.

After talking with my medical team and praying about the next steps, I've learned that a **living donor** would offer the best outcome in terms of timing and long-term success. That's why I'm reaching out to you—my extended family—not with expectations, but with hope and love.

I know this is a huge ask, and I fully understand that not everyone will be able to consider donation. There are many reasons someone might not be in a position to help in this way, and I completely respect that. My goal is simply to share where I am in this journey and to ask you to thoughtfully consider whether this is something you or someone you know might be willing to explore.

If you feel called to learn more about living kidney donation or just want to understand what's involved, I'd be grateful to talk with you. You can also speak directly with my transplant team, who can walk you through everything confidentially and without any obligation:

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Even if donating isn't an option for you, your **prayers, emotional support, and help in sharing my story** are just as valuable and appreciated. This journey is difficult, but I'm encouraged every day by the strength of our family and the love we share.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being part of my life. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or simply want to talk.

With love and gratitude,
[Your Name]

A Letter for FRIENDS

Dear Friends,

I'm writing you today with a vulnerable request. I've been diagnosed with kidney disease, and my doctors have recommended a kidney transplant as the best course of action.

Getting regular dialysis treatments will help my kidneys do their job and keep me alive, but they are time consuming as my treatments can be 3–4 hours a day, 3 times a week. A transplant would offer more flexibility and the ability to live a longer, healthier, more normal life. A transplant would give me more time to do the things I enjoy most, like **[enter recipient's hobbies/reasons here]**.

Finding a kidney for a transplant is not easy. There are over 100,000+ people waiting for a deceased donor kidney, like me. The average wait time is 3–5 years or more for a kidney from a deceased donor. However, there's another option: receiving a kidney from a living donor. Asking someone to consider donating a kidney to me is difficult, but it greatly improves my chances of getting a transplant. Not only would it decrease my waiting time for a transplant; a living donor kidney typically lasts longer and has better function.

Kidney donation can be intimidating and overwhelming. My transplant center can answer any questions you may have, but here are some basic facts about kidney donation:

- You only need one kidney to live a healthy, long life.
- Most donor surgery is done laparoscopically, meaning through small incisions.
- The recovery period is generally 6–8 weeks.
- The cost of your evaluation and surgery will be covered by the transplant center and through my insurance.
- You will have a separate transplant team whose job is to help you understand the risks and benefits and look out for YOUR best interests.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. If you're interested in learning more or interested in donating a kidney to me, please don't hesitate to reach out to my transplant center, **Trinity Health Grand Rapids, at 616-685-6899**. You can visit their website to learn more: TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant.

However, I know living donation may not be right for everyone—but you can still help! Consider helping me by sharing my story with everyone you know. I want to bring awareness to kidney disease and living donation. I am hopeful my efforts will help me receive a kidney and encourage others to consider helping the many people on the wait list.

Thank you,
[Your name] (Note: this is written from the perspective of the person needing a kidney)

A Letter for PLACE OF WORSHIP

Dear Church Family,

I hope this letter finds you well and in good health. I'm writing to you today with a heavy heart but also with hope, faith, and trust in God's provision. As many of you may know, I am facing a serious health challenge: my kidneys are no longer working as they should, and I am in need of a kidney transplant to survive and regain my quality of life.

After much prayer, discussion with my doctors, and the support of my family, I've learned that a **living kidney donation** offers the best chance for a successful transplant and a longer, healthier life. I am reaching out to ask if you would prayerfully consider being tested to see if you might be a potential donor—or to share my story with others who might be willing to help.

I know this is a big request, and I want you to know that **I do not take it lightly**. I understand that becoming a living donor is a deeply personal decision and not one that everyone can make. But I also know the power of our church community, the strength of prayer, and the compassion that we are called to live out in Christ.

If you would like to learn more about the process or have questions, I would be happy to talk with you, or you can reach out to my transplant coordinator at:

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Even if you're not able to donate, you can help in other meaningful ways—by praying for me, by sharing this letter, or simply by offering encouragement.

Thank you for reading my story. I am leaning on God's grace and the love of this church family as I walk through this journey. Your support means more than words can say.

With love and gratitude,
[Your Name]

A Letter for CO-WORKERS

Dear [Team/Co-workers/Friends],

I want to take a moment to share something personal and important with you. As some of you may know, I’ve been managing a serious health issue related to chronic kidney disease. Recently, I’ve learned that I need a kidney transplant to improve my health and quality of life.

After many conversations with my doctors and loved ones, I’ve come to understand that a **living donor transplant** offers the best outcome—in terms of both timing and long-term success. That’s why I’m reaching out, not to put pressure on anyone, but simply to share where I am in this journey and ask for your support in whatever way you feel comfortable.

Becoming a living kidney donor is a deeply personal decision and not one that anyone should feel obligated to consider. But if you’re open to learning more—or know someone who might be—I’d be incredibly grateful for your time and consideration.

If you’re interested, you can contact my transplant team for more information (completely confidential and with no commitment):

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Even if donation isn’t possible, just your encouragement, prayers, or willingness to share this message with others would mean a great deal to me. I’m deeply thankful for the support I’ve received from this workplace and feel fortunate to be surrounded by such compassionate and caring people.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for being part of my support system. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or just want to talk.

Warmly,
[Your Name]

A Letter for NEIGHBORS/COMMUNITY

Dear Neighbor,

I hope this note finds you well. My name is [Your First and Last Name], and I live in [Neighborhood Name]. I’m writing today to share something personal and important that’s happening in my life.

I’ve been diagnosed with advanced kidney disease and recently learned that I need a kidney transplant to survive and live a healthier life. While I am on the transplant waiting list, the wait can be many years long. After discussing options with my doctors, I’ve been encouraged to explore the possibility of finding a **living kidney donor**, which can greatly improve outcomes and reduce the waiting time.

This is not an easy letter to write, and I understand this is a deeply personal and significant request. I’m sharing my story in the hope that someone in our community might be open to learning more or feel moved to consider being tested as a potential donor. Even if that person isn’t you, simply passing this message along could help me find the person who is.

If you’d like to know more—without any pressure or commitment—you can contact my transplant coordinator directly:

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

I know this is a lot to take in, and I completely understand if you’re not able to help in this way. But your support, prayers, or simply sharing this with someone who might be interested could make all the difference in my life.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I’m grateful to be part of a community like ours, and I’m hopeful that by sharing this, the right connection might be made.

With appreciation,
[Your Name]

A Letter for GENERAL PUBLIC

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is [Your Name], and I'm reaching out today with both vulnerability and hope. I'm currently facing a life-threatening health challenge: my kidneys are failing, and I urgently need a transplant to survive. While I'm on the national transplant list, the wait for a deceased donor kidney can take many years—time I may not have.

That's why I'm writing to ask for your help in a way that may feel extraordinary. I'm searching for a **living kidney donor**—someone who is healthy, willing to undergo thorough medical screening, and open to possibly giving the gift of life to someone they've never met.

I know this is a profound request. But I also know that people are capable of incredible generosity. Living donation has become increasingly safe thanks to advances in medical care, and many donors go on to live full, healthy lives with one kidney. All medical costs for the donor are typically covered by my insurance, and support is available to guide anyone who is willing to explore this path.

If you're open to learning more—even just to see what's involved—please reach out to my transplant coordinator. There's absolutely no obligation or pressure:

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Even if you cannot donate, you can still help — by sharing this letter, praying for me, or simply spreading awareness about the need for living kidney donors.

I believe in the kindness of strangers and the power of community. Thank you for taking the time to read my story. If you have any questions or just want to talk, please don't hesitate to reach out.

With gratitude and hope,
[Your Name]

A Letter for the HOLIDAY SEASON

Dear Friends, Family, and Supporters,

As the holiday season draws near, I've been thinking a lot about the people in my life who have shown me kindness, encouragement, and support. The end of the year is often a time for reflection, gratitude, and giving—which makes it the right time for me to share something very personal.

I've been living with serious kidney disease, and I now need a kidney transplant to maintain my health and quality of life. While I'm on the national transplant list, the wait for a deceased donor kidney can be several years—time that I may not have. That's why I'm now turning to the people around me in search of a **living kidney donor**.

This is not an easy request to make, and I understand it may not be possible for most people. But I'm hoping someone reading this might be open to learning more about what's involved in becoming a living donor—or may know someone else who could help.

If you're curious or would like to find out more, you can contact my transplant team directly. They can answer questions privately and without any obligation:

Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center
Living Donor Team: 616-685-6899 or donor@trinity-health.org
TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant

Living donation has become very safe for healthy individuals, and donors are thoroughly screened to ensure they're a good candidate. All medical costs are typically covered by my insurance, and most donors are able to return to their normal activities within weeks.

Even if donation isn't an option, just sharing my story, offering emotional support, or keeping me in your thoughts this season means more than I can say. The kindness of others is truly the greatest gift I could hope for right now.

Wishing you a joyful, healthy, and peaceful holiday season.

Warmly,
[Your Name]

Resource Websites

- **Trinity Health Kidney Transplant Center:** TrinityHealthMichigan.org/KidneyTransplant
- **National Kidney Registry:** KidneyRegistry.org
- **Find A Kidney:** FindAKidney.org
- **National Kidney Foundation of Michigan:** NKFM.org
- **United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS):** UNOS.org

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