



Recanati / Miller Transplantation Institute (RMTI) Patient Resource

How to Ask Someone to Become a Living Donor

For patients in need of a life-saving transplant, asking a loved one to donate all or part of an organ can be a difficult discussion to have. The following points may be helpful in getting the conversation started.

What's the first step?

As you talk about organ transplant with your physician, ask about living donation as an option. Your doctor can give you the best advice on what to consider and who among friends and relatives may be best to ask.

Who makes a good living donor?

Living donors are often family members or close friends—though sometimes they're benevolent strangers. The best donors are people who are in good health, who match in terms of blood chemistry, and who have the ability to look after their own health long-term. Think about the people in your life whom you would feel most comfortable asking, then talk to your doctor about these individuals to determine who would be best to approach.

As you begin to approach potential donors, you can reassure them that all donors go through an extensive, confidential screening to make sure that donating will not be bad for their health. Information is power, and this may help alleviate some concerns.

Beyond asking family and friends, some patients have turned to social media. Others have asked friends to be ambassadors on their behalf. The RMTI transplant team and staff of the Zweig Family Center for Living Donation can help patients develop a plan for asking others that works best for them, and can offer guidance on how to have this conversation.

What if the person I ask is reluctant?

Because donating an organ is a significant commitment, be understanding and respectful if someone you ask is reluctant or says no. Though short-term complications for donors are rare, they are possible.

Additionally, donors may have to take time off from work or school for the surgery and recovery, and this may not be something they can afford to do.

The decision to donate is ultimately up to the donor, and it can take time to consider. While each year, thousands of people say yes, many for a variety of personal reasons also say no.

The important thing to remember is that if you need an organ, living donation isn't your only option. Deceased donation could also be a possibility, and there are ways to manage your health until an organ becomes available.

What if the person I ask is willing, but isn't a match?

In the case of kidney donations, if you find a willing donor, but they are not a proper match, the RMTI can help facilitate an organ exchange. An organ exchange is an arrangement whereby two recipients essentially exchange donors (and the two donors trade recipients). One recent chain of kidney exchanges involved RMTI patients Dennis and Jill, whose [story of living donation](#) had a very positive outcome.

Thanks to scientific advances, it is no longer necessary for a donor to be a person's next of kin. This has made it significantly easier to identify potential donors, and has made altruistic donation—donating an organ to someone the donor doesn't necessarily know—more common and possible.