



Kidney Transplant & Finding a Living Donor

November 28, 2025

1pm to 3pm



Kidney Transplant & Finding a Living Donor

Part 1: Kidney Transplant Recipient Program (Zameena)

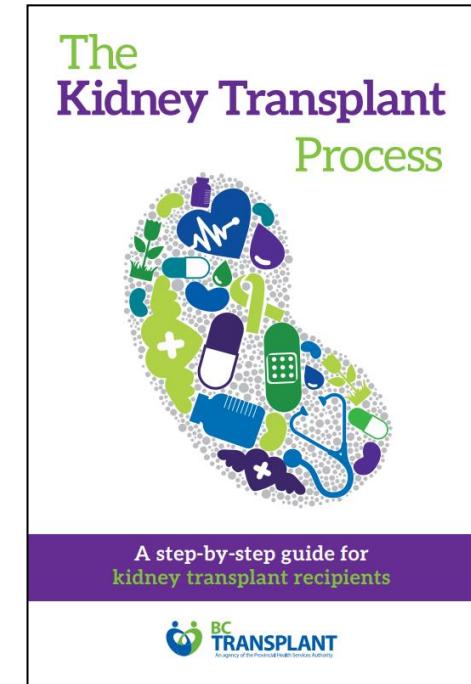
- Who is eligible? What are the transplant options?
- What is the process?
- Kidney recipient's experience
- Questions & answers

Part 2: Living Kidney Donor Program (Jody and Jennifer)

- How can someone donate?
- What is the donor assessment like?
- Roles of Social Workers & Finding a living donor
- Living kidney donor's experience
- Questions & answers

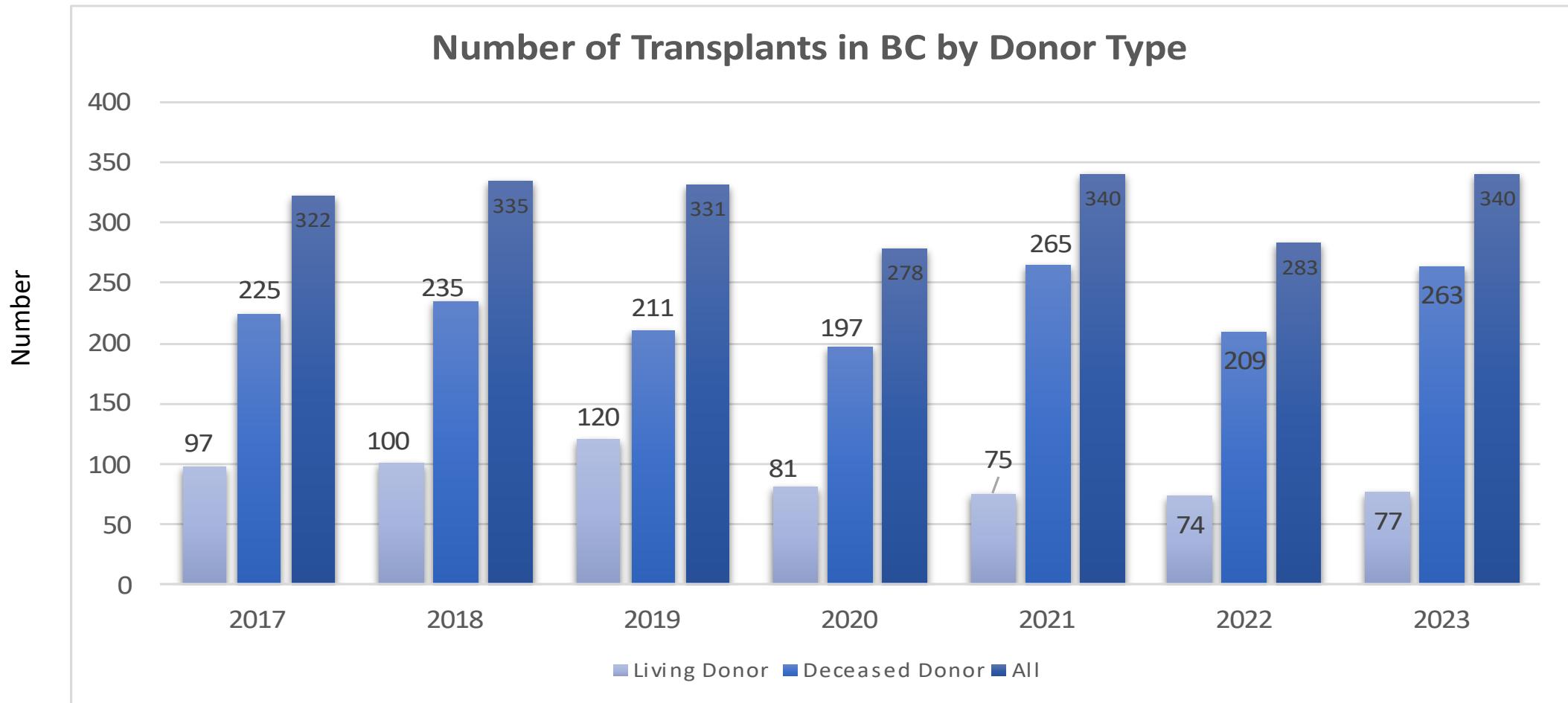
Part 1: Kidney Transplant Recipient Program

- Who is eligible? What are the transplant options? (Zameena)
- What is the process? (Zameena)
- Kidney recipient's experience (John)
- Questions & answers (Everyone)



BC Kidney Transplant Stats

www.transplant.bc.ca



Kidney transplantation....

Is it the right treatment for me? Do the benefits outweigh the risks?

- Benefits of transplant
 - Feel better / have more energy
 - Freedom from dialysis
 - Greater independence / free to travel
 - Increased life expectancy
 - Regular diet
- Risks of transplant
 - Surgical Procedure. e.g. bleeding, infection, anesthesia
 - Medications weaken your immune system
 - More prone to infections
 - More prone to some cancers

Referral process

- Referred by primary nephrologist
 - Preferably when GFR is around 20
- Primary Nephrologist and GP continue to act as primary caregivers
- Referral does not mean you are on the waitlist for a transplant. You must be assessed first

Assessment process

Initial workup and preliminary education is completed by referring center

- Testing may include:
 - Bloodwork
 - Heart diagnostics
 - Chest x-ray
 - Dental check up
 - Baseline cancer screening (FIT/colonoscopy, Pap test/ mammogram for females, prostate testing for males)
 - Infectious disease screening and vaccinations

Assessment process - Clinic visit

- When basic tests are completed, a patient can be booked for transplant clinic
- A clinic visit includes appointments with
 - The transplant physician
 - The transplant surgeon
 - Social Worker
 - Nurse
 - Additional staff as deemed necessary

Assessment process - Clinic visit

Your waiting time for a clinic appointment will depend on...

- Whether you have a potential live donor
- Blood type and the anticipated waiting time to transplant for your blood group

Approval process

- Once all investigations are reviewed by the entire team, you will be...
 - Approved
 - Asked to complete further testing
 - In rare cases, a transplant may not be the best option
- Length of Process depends on medical conditions, tests required and availability of appointments
- Time to transplant will depend on donor options and your blood type

Approved for transplant – now what?

Pre-Dialysis

- Live donor transplant when GFR <15
- Deceased donor waiting list when started on dialysis

On Dialysis

- Live donor transplant
- Deceased donor waitlist

Why living donation?

- Benefits for Recipient:
 - Kidney lasts longer with living donation
 - Avoid the waiting list
 - Potential for pre-dialysis transplant
 - More opportunity to plan ahead for transplant
 - Greater control over personal/professional life

Deceased Donor WAITLIST

Wait time for deceased donor transplant is affected by:

- Blood type
 - A 1-2 years
 - AB 1-2 year
 - B 3-4 years
 - O 2-3 years
- Dialysis start date
- Changes to a recipient's health status
 - Temporarily placed on hold for new medical issues or travel
- Level of sensitization

Are you sensitized?

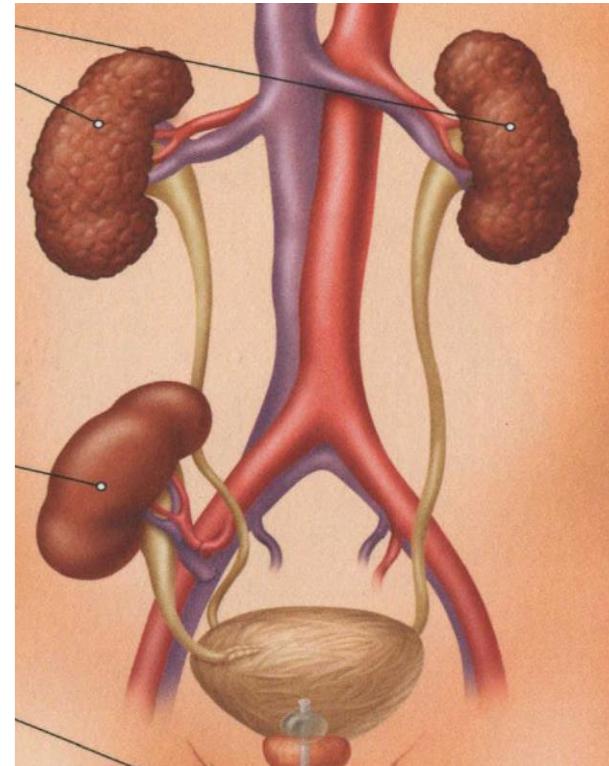
- A donor's blood type must be suitable for you
- Blood testing predicts whether a particular donor's kidney can be safely transplanted. This is checked before a living donor or deceased donor transplant is confirmed.
- You may be harder to match (more sensitized) because of a past:
 - Blood transfusion
 - Pregnancy
 - Transplant
 - Serious infection

What is your role/responsibility?

- Manage lifestyle factors:
 - Optimize your health so you are ready for transplant
 - Maintain healthy, active lifestyle
 - Healthy weight
 - Optimal diabetic control
 - Smoking cessation
- Once referred, keep transplant center informed of:
 - New medical concerns
 - Seeing a new Health Care Provider / Specialist
 - Admission to hospital
 - Change of address and contact numbers

Recipient transplant surgery

- Surgery takes about 3 hours
- Original kidneys are usually left in place
- Transplanted kidney placed low in abdomen near bladder



What to expect post Transplant

- In hospital for approximately 5-7 days
- Assessed frequently and anti-rejection drugs started
- Recipient typically stays in Vancouver for up to 3 months post-transplant
- Once stable: transferred to a Post-Transplant clinic closer to home

Note: Home Team and Transplant Team social workers will assist with planning for transplant

Graft failure / rejection

Acute rejection

- When immune system attacks the kidney
- Occurs in 10-15% of patients in the 1st year
- Responds well to treatment
- Does not mean you will lose your kidney

Chronic rejection

- Slow, progressive decrease in graft function
- Reasons are less understood

(average lifespan of a kidney transplant is 16 years)

Transplant Recipient Experience

Introducing..... John



Questions for Recipient Team

Part 2: Living Kidney Donor Program

- How can someone donate? (Jennifer)
- What is the donor assessment like? (Jennifer)
- Roles of Social Workers & Finding a living donor (Jody)
- Living kidney donor's experience (Colleen)
- Questions & answers (Everyone)

Purpose of the Living Donor Program

- Provides education and testing for potential donors
- Commits to safe outcomes
- Supports the donor's decisions
- Maintains privacy and confidentiality

Living Donation Principles

- Voluntary decision
- Free from coercion
- Donor-led process – they set the pace of their workup
- Informed consent is an ongoing process during workup
 - Check-in with donors at all phases of assessment to ensure they want to proceed to the next step
- Right to withdraw or pause testing at anytime

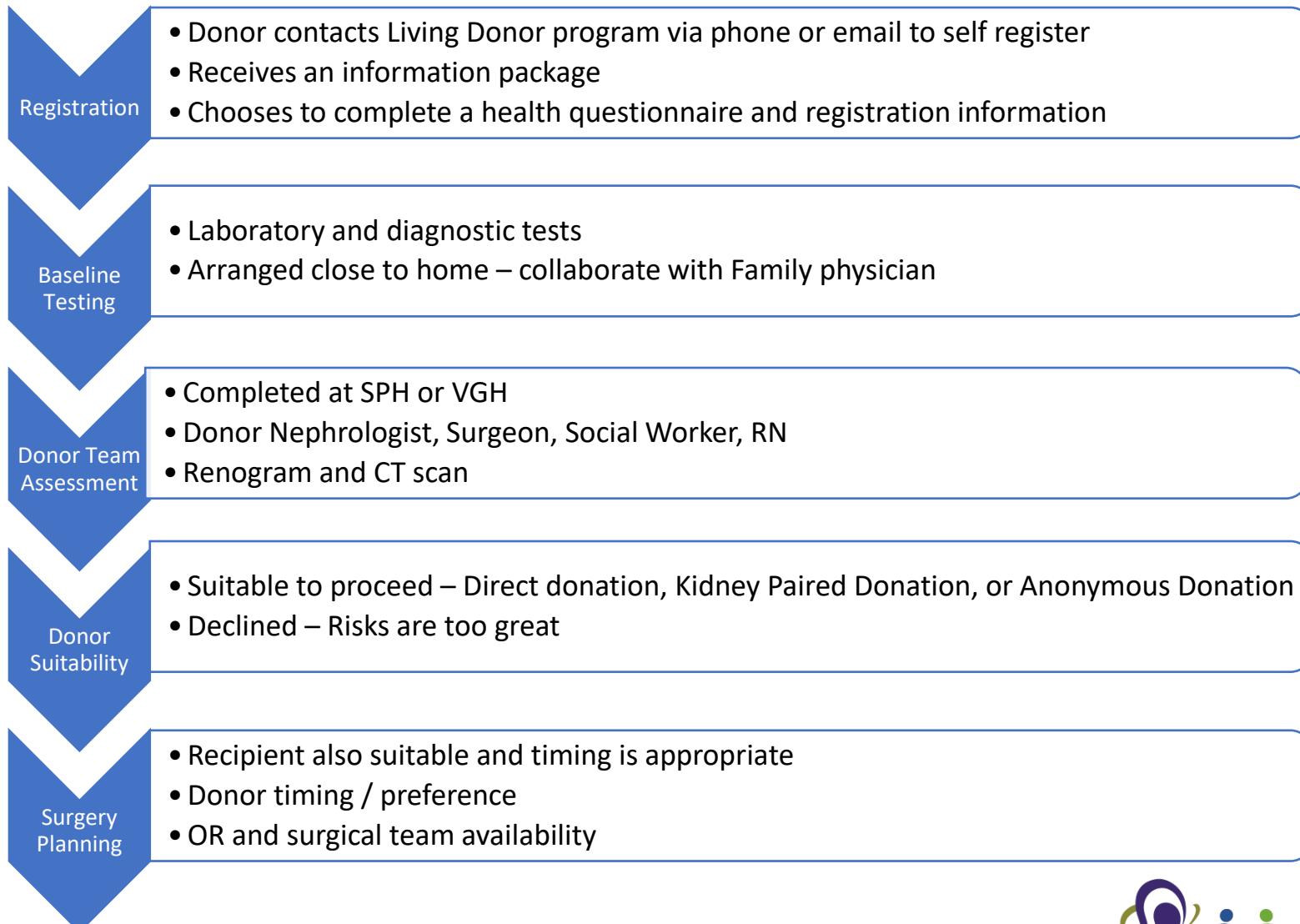
Who Can be a Living Kidney Donor?

- Family members
- Friends, acquaintances, work colleagues
- A donor does not need to be the same blood type as their intended recipient
 - **Kidney Paired Donation Program (KPD)**
 - By participating in this Program you can help a loved one or friend get a kidney transplant even if you can not directly donate to them

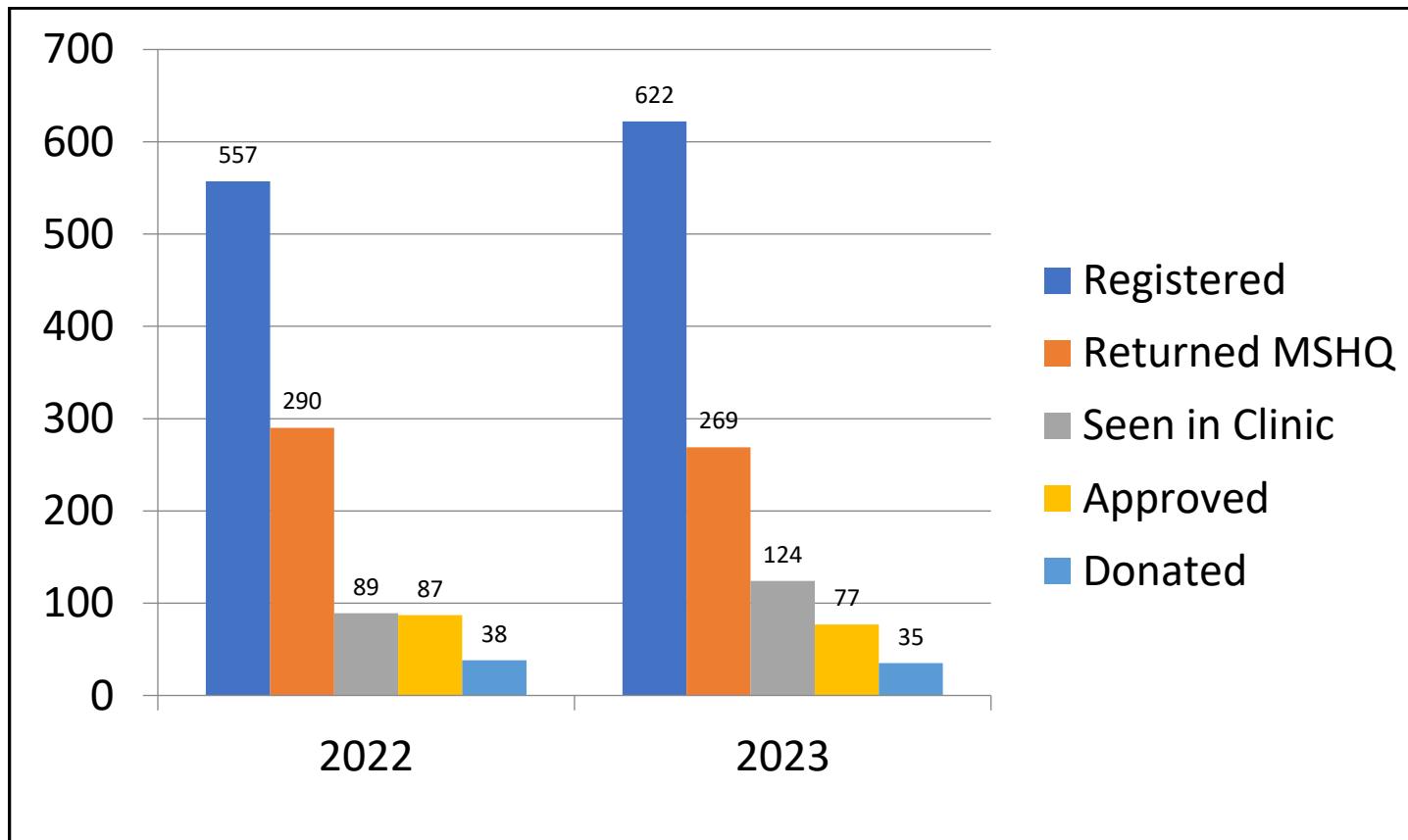
Possible Reasons for Declining a Donor

- Inadequate kidney function to donate
- Diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance
- Obesity
- Cancer
- Active substance misuse
- Uncontrolled blood pressure
- Unsuitable anatomy (too many arteries or veins)
- Psychosocial issues, pressure etc.

Living Donor Assessment Process



Donor Stats: Enrollment to Donation (recent SPH experience)



Kidney Paired Donation (KPD) Program

- Canada-wide program
- Considered when a donor is approved but cannot directly donate to their intended recipient
- May be considered for compatible pairs if there is a size discrepancy
- Option for Non-Directed Anonymous Donors
 - Not linked to any recipient

Facts about Kidney Paired Donation

- Entering the KPD program does not guarantee a match
- The donor:
 - Must be approved by a centre in Canada
 - May have to travel
 - Remains anonymous to their matched pair

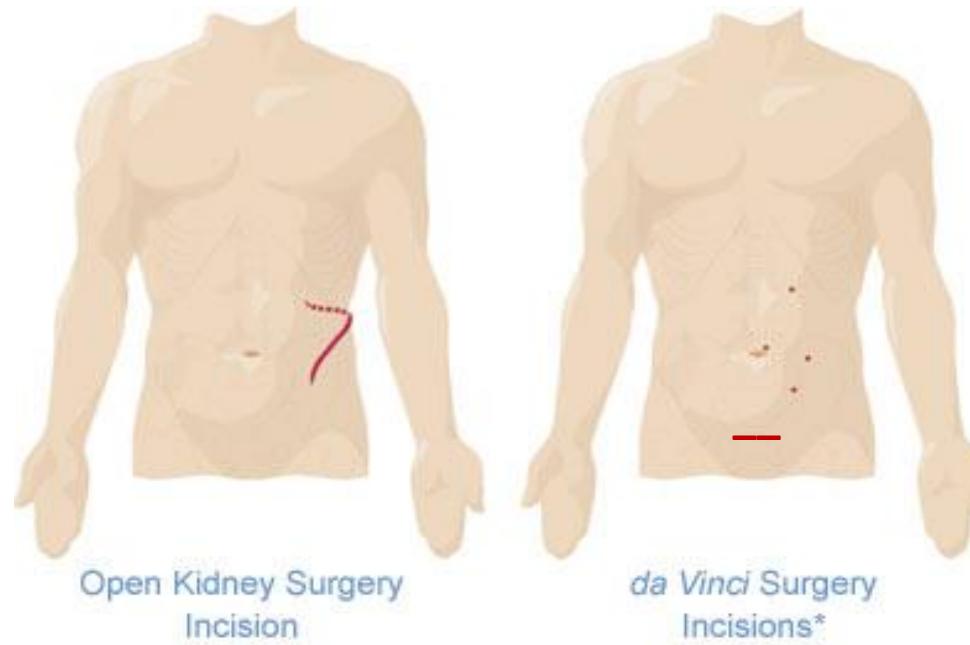
Out of Country Donors

- Known to the recipient
- Blood type compatible
- Must have access to health care in their home country
- Can be challenging if communication barriers exist
- Visitor's Visa may be required (but not granted)
- Donor testing repeated once in Canada
 - Covered by recipient's MSP
- Still may be found unsuitable

The Donor Surgery

Two types of donor incisions:

1. Laparoscopic (minimally invasive surgery)
2. Open nephrectomy



Surgical Risks for the Donor

- Kidney donation is a major surgery with 6-8 weeks of recovery
 - Length of hospital stay: 2-3 days
- Complication rates are low
- Most common concerns after surgery:
 - Incision pain
 - Nausea
 - Constipation
 - Fatigue
- Risk of a serious complication is 1 – 2%
- The risk of dying as a result of the operation is 0.03%

What to Expect Long-Term

- Life expectancy not reduced
- Long term kidney function about 70% of pre-donation
- Risk of kidney failure later in life very low (<1%)
- Pregnancy considerations
 - Closer follow-up recommended during pregnancy
- Long term risk of proteinuria, higher blood pressure

Living Donor Long-Term Follow Up

- Closely monitored after donation – life long follow-up
- Annual medical exam with Primary Care Provider (GP, NP)
 - Blood Pressure
- Blood and Urine Testing
 - Results are copied to Transplant center and reviewed by the team
- Transplant team consults as needed

Social Worker Roles & Finding a Living Donor (Jody)

Recipient Social Worker roles

Home Team Social Worker (KCC/Dialysis)

- Ongoing support before transplant
- Assistance with donor outreach
- Works with you and the transplant team to plan for transplant

Transplant Social Worker

- Conducts transplant assessment
- Provides counselling and emotional support
- Additional donor outreach support and strategies
- Assists with transplant planning (accommodation, support plan, additional resources)
- Support during surgery and recovery while in Vancouver

What is donor outreach?

- Most people benefit from a living donor transplant
- It can be hard to talk about living donation and your need for a transplant
- You can ask family or friends to help you with donor outreach
- Your home and transplant teams can provide information, tools and support
- There are lots of examples online and do what fits for you.

Information for Recipients

- Donors often offer to donate once they understand the need
- Donors are equally concerned about their relationship with you
- Donation is not the right emotional fit for everyone
- Donors are never obligated to donate and no pressure is placed on them
- Donors obligations/responsibilities are considered and planned for

Finding a Donor

Getting the Word Out:
A step-by-step guide for
reaching out to potential donors

BC TRANSPLANT
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

After Doing Outreach

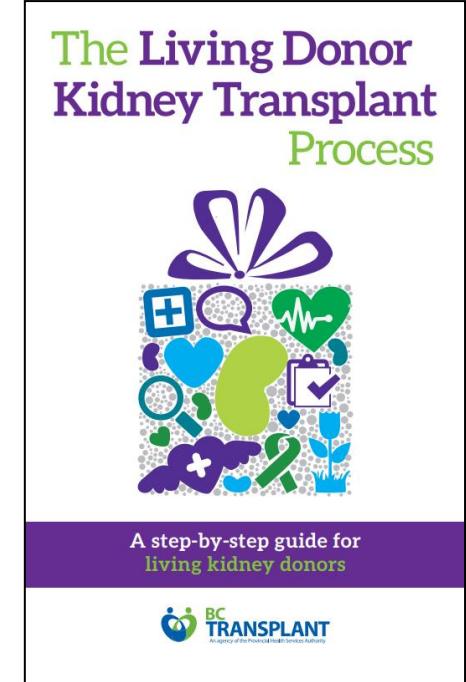
- Finding a donor can take a while
- Receive ongoing emotional support
- Trust the process and talk to your home and transplant teams as it unfolds
- Focus on the positives of your efforts, outreach is a way to be active in your medical treatment plan
- Provide regular updates to your friends and family

Donor Social Worker

- Meets with donors during assessment for donation
- Assists donor to explore whether donation is the right decision
- Provides supportive counselling around donation and any related concerns
- Assists with practical tasks and planning for donation
- Provides support and assistance through surgery and recovery

Donor's Perspective

- See donation as a gift
- Often report it was an “automatic” decision
- Don’t want attention or any “fuss” about donation
- Report it was a rewarding experience for them
- Lead normal, healthy life with one kidney



Donor Social Work Role after donation

- Provides ongoing support during recovery
- Liaises with medical team regarding any concerns
- Assists with practical concerns related to recovery
- Provides counselling support regarding recovery and expectations

Donor Programs

- Living Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement Program (LODERP)
 - Assists donors with some out of pocket expenses
- Living Donor Mentorship Program
 - Trained volunteer kidney donors can connect with people considering donation
 - Matches kidney donors and potential donors with similar backgrounds, lifestyles

For more information: The Kidney Foundation
www.kidney.ca/bc or 1-800-567-8112

Living Kidney Donor Experience

Introducing..... Colleen!



Questions for the Donor Team