

Why Become a Living Liver Donor?

A living donor makes all the difference in helping a patient receive a life-saving liver transplant. Relatives, loved ones, friends, and people who wish to remain anonymous may serve as living donors.

The urgent need for liver donors

11,000

people are waiting for a liver transplant¹



2,096 Californians are on the waitlist



35%

Latinx

16%

Asians and Pacific Islanders

14%

Black Americans

Types of living donors



Directed

Family members and friends



Indirect

Donors in a “chain donation.” A portion of their liver goes to a stranger in exchange for a compatible liver donation for their loved one. More than one pair of living donors and recipients may be linked in a donation chain to receive matching organs.



Non-directed

People who donate without an intended recipient whom they know personally

Shorter recovery time

When a living donor is in good health and is a good match for a recipient, our minimally invasive laparoscopic procedure allows clinicians to manipulate surgical tools through tiny holes in the body and visualize the internal operating area. Laparoscopy shortens a donor’s hospital stay and recovery time.

After you donate part of your liver

- A donor’s liver **fully regrows within 4 months** and will ultimately regain full function. The donated portion does the same for the recipient.
- With a laparoscopic procedure, you may spend **1 week or less in the hospital** and fully recover within 3 months.
- If a traditional surgical procedure is used, the donor may be hospitalized for **2 weeks** and then recuperate at home for 2 or 3 months.

Learn more at stanfordhealthcare.org/donateliver

¹ “Living Donor Living Paired Exchange,” American Transplant Journal, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajt.16137#:~:text=LPE%20allows%20liver%20donors%20and,who%20remain%20on%20the%20list>

² Risks, UNOS Transplant Living, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://transplantliving.org/living-donation/being-a-living-donor/risks/>

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Frequently Asked Questions



Health Care

How do doctors decide whether I can be a living donor?

Stanford Health Care has a rigorous selection policy. The process of evaluating a potential donor's health and compatibility is safe, noninvasive, and comprehensive. In most cases, we can assess the health of a liver without a liver biopsy.

What if I want to donate a part of my liver to a person who is not a "match"?

Donor and recipient are matched by blood group, tissue typing, and how recipient blood serum reacts to donor cells. If you don't match, you would become part of a "chain donation," donating a portion of your liver to another recipient in a chain of donors and recipients in exchange for a compatible liver for your loved one. Each recipient matches with a donor in the chain, resulting in multiple transplants.¹

Do my faith and traditions permit organ donation?

Many religions view organ donation as an act of kindness or a matter of individual conscience. If you have questions or concerns, consult your spiritual advisor.

How risky is living donor surgery?

All patients experience some discomfort after surgery. Minimally invasive laparoscopic procedures are the least risky. Learn more about risks at the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) website.²

Can adults over age 50 donate?

Yes. Stanford Health Care does not have age restrictions. Some people have donated in their late 60s. Donors must be healthy. All potential living donors undergo a thorough medical evaluation to determine if donation is safe.

Who is qualified to become a living donor?

Living donors must be in good health. All potential living donors undergo a comprehensive medical evaluation to determine whether donation is safe for both recipient and donor. We welcome potential living donors of all races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. Also note that having tattoos does not prevent you from becoming a living donor.

Where can I learn about living donors' experiences?

Find donor and patient stories in the UNOS Transplant Living community at transplantliving.org/community, donatelife.net/stories, and donatelifecalifornia.org.

Does Stanford Health Care offer guidance and support for living donors?

Our independent donor advocates, social workers and team facilitate peer-to-peer appointments to help answer questions and provide support throughout the donor's journey. Staff interpreters are available in person, by phone, and by video in the most requested languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, American Sign Language (ASL), Farsi/Dari, Korean and many others.

How can I learn more?

- Whether or not you are sure you want to become a living donor, the first step is to complete our living donor interest survey—stanfordhealthcare.org/donateliver—so our team can begin to determine your eligibility, speak with you, and provide more information.
- If you have questions, call our living donor team: **650-498-7878**
- Visit stanfordhealthcare.org/livingdonor

1 "Living Donor Living Paired Exchange," American Transplant Journal, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajt.16137#:~:text=LPE%20allows%20liver%20donors%20and,who%20remain%20on%20the%20list>.

2 Risks, UNOS Transplant Living, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://transplantliving.org/living-donation/being-a-living-donor/risks/>

3 <https://www.donatelife.net/lgbtq-faq/>