When do I have to come back for follow-up visits after donation?
After you are discharged from the hospital, you will usually come back to see your surgeon about two weeks after the surgery. You should also return to the transplant center for follow-up visits at 6, 12 and 24 months after donating.

What are the risks of living with one kidney?
The risks of living with one kidney appear to be small if donors remain healthy and do not develop diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and/or obesity. This is why we screen potential donors to try to ensure that they do not have these diseases at the time of donation and are also not at high risk of developing them in the future.

What happens if I develop kidney failure in the future?
The current national policy is that former donors who require a transplant themselves at a future time are given four extra points on the waiting list, which will help them to move up on the list. This extra waiting time only applies to the wait for a kidney, not any other organ that a former kidney donor might need in the future.

Why do I need to have health insurance if my recipient’s insurance pays for my surgery?
All donors are required to have health insurance in the event that any medical issues/diagnoses arise during the course of their evaluation. In this instance, the recipient’s insurance does not cover the donor’s medical expenses, so the potential donor must have health insurance in place to ensure that they will be covered in such a circumstance.

Are there any expenses related to donation that aren’t covered by my recipient’s insurance?
Yes, there are ‘out-of-pocket’ expenses that are not covered by insurance. These include expenses related to travel and hotel stays, childcare, elder care, follow-up costs (depends on where follow-up occurs at transplant center or with your own doctor), and lost wages.

Cornell University’s assistance in developing this document is greatly appreciated.

If you have further questions please call St. Vincent Transplant Services at 317-338-6701.
Quick Facts About Living Donations

- A living donor can be a family member, good friend, spouse, in-law or even a stranger/good Samaritan. Thanks to improved medications, a genetic link between the donor and recipient is no longer required to ensure a successful transplant.

- The kidney is the most commonly donated organ. People usually have two kidneys, and one is all that is needed to live a normal life. When the kidney is removed, the single normal kidney will increase in size to compensate for the loss of the donated kidney.

- To donate a kidney, you must be in good health and have normal kidney function. The prospective donor and recipient must have compatible blood types.

- Donors are never financially compensated. Under federal law, it is illegal to receive money or gifts in exchange for an organ donation. The cost of the living donated organ. People usually have two kidneys, and one is all that is needed to live a normal life. When the kidney is removed, the single normal kidney will increase in size to compensate for the loss of the donated kidney.

- To donate a kidney, you must be in good health and have normal kidney function. The prospective donor and recipient must have compatible blood types.

- A kidney can be removed in either of two ways—the traditional open surgery or the laparoscopic technique.

Who makes a good living kidney donor?

A good living donor is motivated to donate, free of coercion, healthy, and has normal kidney function. The person must be both medically and psychosocially fit, and must understand the risks of donation.

What testing will I have to undergo to see if I can be a donor?

The evaluation process involves both a psychosocial and medical component. The psychosocial evaluation is performed by a clinical social worker to address issues such as motivation guiding decision to donate, ability to understand the risks of donation and availability of support during the recovery period after donation.

Components of the medical evaluation include general medical history, social history, physical exam, comprehensive laboratory tests, chest X-ray, EKG, CTA, exercise stress echocardiogram (if indicated) and cancer screening.

Is the operation to remove my kidney dangerous?

The operation to remove your kidney does involve risk, because you are undergoing surgery requiring general anesthesia, similar to any other laparoscopic surgery (such as removal of your gallbladder). These risks include pain, infection, blood clots, reaction to anesthesia, conversion to open nephrectomy, need for re-operation, need for re-admission to the hospital, hernia development, intestinal obstruction, and death.

How much pain will I experience after the surgery?

The amount and degree of pain that each donor will experience is highly individualized. People have very different pain thresholds, and this affects how donors will feel after their surgery as well as how much pain medication they require after donating. Donors receive pain medication during their hospital stay. After discharge from the hospital, the donor may require pain medication anywhere from a few days to a few weeks after the surgery.

How long will I be in the hospital?

Using today’s surgical techniques, most donors are in the hospital for approximately two days. The morning after the surgery, the bladder catheter placed during the surgery is removed, you begin to walk around, and you are placed on a clear liquid diet. On the second morning, most patients receive solid food, and are discharged home later in the day.

How long will I need to be out of work?

The answer to this question depends on the type of work that you do. People who work in an office setting usually return to work in 4 to 6 weeks, while people with more physically demanding jobs may need to recover 6 to 8 weeks before returning to work.

What is the recovery period after donation?

The recovery process is another area that will vary greatly from donor to donor. In general, however, most donors undergoing laparoscopic procedures to remove their kidney feel back to “normal” or back to “100%” of their usual activities by about one month after the surgery.

Will donating my kidney affect my lifestyle?

Kidney donation should not affect your lifestyle. Because kidney donors are healthy and generally have good health habits, it is recommended to continue to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating a healthy diet, exercising and not smoking.