



Live Kidney Donation: Medical Toolkit

CHAPTER • 8

Living kidney donation and possible surgery problems

What are possible problems from a kidney donation surgery?

Living kidney donation has a very low chance of causing problems. This is probably because donors are evaluated so carefully and are only allowed to donate if they have a low chance of problems from surgery.

But living kidney donation is still surgery and uses general anesthesia. Surgery problems can include:

- Pain
- Infection
- Blood loss (which may require blood transfusions)
- Blood clots
- Allergic reactions to anesthesia
- Pneumonia
- Injury to other tissue or organs
- And even death

Laparoscopy causes fewer surgery problems

Laparoscopy is a type of surgery where the surgeon makes 3 or 4 small cuts in your stomach area instead of 1 long cut (which is called open surgery).

Living kidney donors who have laparoscopy will have some pain at first, but compared to donors who have open surgery, they will have:

- Less pain and discomfort
- Less time in the hospital

- An improved scar
- Overall faster recovery after surgery

What are the surgery problem rates?

Several studies have found these rates:

- About 3 out of 100 kidney donors (3%) had surgery problems
- About 2 out of 100 (1.7%) had to go back into the hospital
- 3-4 out of 1,000 donors (0.3%-0.4%) needed another surgery or a blood transfusion
- About 3 in 10,000 donors (.03%) died – this is a small chance

Kidney donors who have laparoscopy have a lower rate of going back into the hospital 1 year after surgery when compared with patients who had similar surgeries, like appendix or gall bladder removal.

Living kidney donation has low rates of problems and re-admissions to the hospital. The medical evaluation is thorough to make sure that people who donate a kidney have a low chance of problems.

References

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There is no difference in kidney patient outcomes if the donor surgery is laparoscopic or open.



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Note: This information is the opinion of the Living Donor Community of Practice (LDCOP) of the American Society of Transplantation. The LDCOP is a group of health care professionals and researchers who specialize in living kidney donation. The LDCOP's recommendations are meant to offer you helpful information, but you may find opinions from other groups or organizations that are helpful to you, too.