



MedStar Health

MEDSTAR GEORGETOWN
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

MedStar Georgetown
Transplant Institute

Your guide to living donor liver transplant

**It's
how
we
treat
people.**



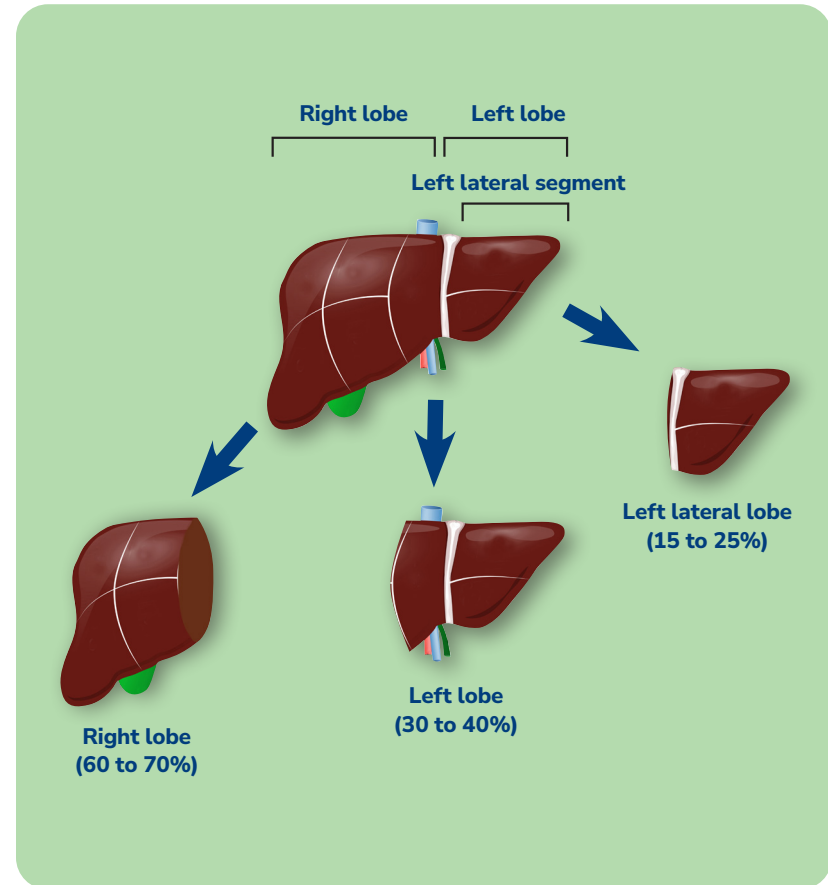
What is a living donor liver transplant?

The first living liver donation transplant was performed in 1989. Since then, the procedure has been further refined and is currently the only solution to the critical shortage of deceased donor organs.

- A person donates a portion of his or her liver to someone in need of a liver transplant.
- The recipient's entire liver is removed and replaced by the piece of liver from the living donor.
- The donated portion of the liver and the donor's liver grow back to full size within approximately eight weeks.

Living donor liver transplantation options

The right or left lobe can be donated to an adult recipient. The left lateral segment can be donated to a small child. During donation surgery, the donor's gallbladder is removed if they are donating their right or left lobe. The gallbladder can remain if the left lateral segment is donated.



At left: Alexis Wilson donated a portion of her liver to her son.



Why choose MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute for your living liver donor transplant?

- A national leader in liver transplant
- One of the largest liver transplant centers in the region
- Over 40 years of transplant experience

Why consider living donation?

There are thousands of people waiting for a liver transplant in the U.S. Being on the waitlist does not guarantee that you will get a transplant. **Around thirty percent of patients on the waitlist become too sick or will die waiting.***

Living donor liver transplant is the only alternative for patients who have a lower Model for End-Stage Liver Disease (MELD) score and are at risk for remaining on the transplant waitlist for a long time.

What are the advantages of living donation?

- Living liver donor transplant eliminates waiting time for a transplant and can be performed right after the completion of the donor and recipient evaluations. With living donation, a recipient can avoid waiting for months or years for a deceased donor liver. With a shorter wait time, recipients can avoid facing life-threatening complications and be transplanted before becoming too sick.
- Patients who get transplanted before becoming sicker and weaker experience fewer complications and recover faster after receiving a liver transplant.
- Since living donors are healthy people and undergo extensive medical evaluation, the liver quality is likely higher.
- Transplant surgery can be scheduled on a day that is convenient for recipient and donor.

Source: SRTR/OPTN [OnlineLibrary.W-iley.com/doi/10.1111/ajt.15276](https://www.onlinejournaloftransplantation.com/doi/10.1111/ajt.15276)



Bonnie Embrey's daughter Samantha donated half of her liver to her mother.

Who can be a living donor?

- A living donor can be a family member, friend, or even someone you've never met.
- The donor must have a compatible blood type.

This chart shows which blood types are compatible for donation.

Donor's blood type	Recipient's blood type
O	O or A2
A or O	A
B or O	B
A, B, AB, or O	AB

Donors must:

- Be at least 18 years old or be an emancipated minor
- Undergo thorough medical and psychosocial evaluation
- Understand the risk and benefits of donation and the alternative treatments available to recipient
- Donate voluntarily, free of coercion

How to find a living donor

- Recognize this is a highly emotional and potentially relationship-altering conversation. Stress, fear, and even guilt are all natural feelings.
- A strong understanding of the processes and procedures will give you more confidence when talking about the option of living donation.
- Consider reframing your thinking. View the conversation as an opportunity to explain your situation and educate others about the potential for living donation.
- Not everyone can be a donor. The key is sharing your story with as many people as possible.

How to spread the word

- Share the information with any community groups or organizations you are a part of such as your neighborhood, school, place of worship, work, alumni groups, and sports leagues. Also consider posting your story on social media.

Some details you should include when sharing your story are:

- Why you need a liver transplant
- Your blood type
- What living donation is and the benefits for the recipient
- Your contact information
- Transplant center's living donor team contact information

The transplant team is always available to talk with you or a potential donor about living donation.

Who's on the living donor team?

The multidisciplinary team includes a hepatologist, living donor transplant surgeon, nurse coordinator, social worker, independent living donor advocate, and psychiatrist.

The team's priority is to protect the safety and confidentiality of the living donor. For that reason, the living donor team functions separately and independently from the recipient's transplant team.



Above: the living donor liver team.

What is the process for becoming a living donor?

Visit **MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor** to complete an online questionnaire. If you don't know what your blood type is, we can help you find out.

The team will review the information from your questionnaire and obtain your full medical history. If you are healthy and meet criteria to be a living donor, an evaluation can be scheduled.

The Evaluation

- **Lab work to check your liver and kidney function, blood clotting factors, exposure to diseases, and autoimmune markers.**
- **MRI and CT angiogram: These tests use contrast dye to look at the vessels and structure of your liver.**
- **Echocardiogram (ultrasound of your heart) and electrocardiogram (ECG): These tests check your heart function.**
- **Meet with living donor team, including the surgeon, hepatologist, anesthesiologist, social worker, independent living donor advocate, and transplant coordinator.**
- **The donor must be up to date with all age appropriate cancer screenings (mammogram, colonoscopy, cervical cancer screening, prostate cancer screening).**

The Decision

- **The living donor team will meet to review all your information. Your safety is the team's top priority. If the team feels that you are able to safely donate a portion of your liver, you will be approved for donation.**

After your evaluation and approval to become a living donor, you are scheduled for surgery, and are then on the road to recovery.

The Surgery

- You will be given general anesthesia.
- You and the recipient will have surgery at the same time.
- Once a piece of your liver is removed, it will be transplanted immediately into the recipient.
- The living donor surgery usually takes between three and five hours.
- You will go to the ICU for the first night after surgery to be monitored closely. You will have IVs, a Foley catheter, and a drain at your surgical site.
- You will be in the hospital four to seven days after surgery. If you have any complications, you might need to remain in the hospital longer.

The Recovery

- This is a major abdominal surgery. The team will work to keep pain levels down, and most donors are pain-free within three weeks.
- You can expect to return to daily activities after four weeks and return to work between four weeks and three months.
- Expect follow-up appointments with lab work one week, one month, six months, one year, and two years after surgery. For the first two to three weeks after surgery, plan to stay within one hour of MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in case of any complications.

What are the risks of living donation?

Many of the risks involved with living donation are the same as with any major surgery. These risks include:

- Bleeding
- Bile leak
- Blood clot
- Infection

Other risks, although rare, include:

- Liver failure
- Death

If you are considering living liver donation, remember: our number one priority is your safety. We will discuss these risks in depth during evaluation.

Who will pay for donor surgery?

The recipient's insurance will cover donor medical and surgical costs.

Donors should consult their health insurance provider about any other health problems that are not related to donation and complications that may occur long term.

To learn more about living donor liver transplant, call the nurse coordinator at **202-444-1360**.

Below: Thomas Fishbein, MD, performing a liver transplant.



How to become a living liver donor



Complete **online questionnaire:** [MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor)



Find out your **blood type**



Meet with **living donor team**



Have medical **tests**



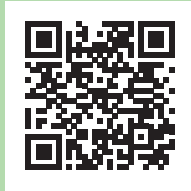
Schedule donor **surgery**

Resources

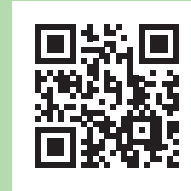
Questions? These resources can help you learn more about living liver donation.



[MedStarGeorgetown.org/Transplant](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/Transplant)



American Liver Foundation:
[LiverFoundation.org](https://www.LiverFoundation.org)



United Network for Organ Sharing
(UNOS): [UNOS.org](https://www.UNOS.org)

[MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor)

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