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Information and Resources

Long-Term Health Risks Low for Kidney Donors

Study Shows People Who Donate Kidneys Have Good Long-Term Survival Rates

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WebMD Health News

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March 9, 2010 -- [Kidney](#) donors fare just as well as non-donors over the long term, according to a new study.

Researchers compared survival rates of kidney donors to healthy adults who were not kidney donors and found kidney donation did not affect long-term survival rates.

"Regardless of what physiologic changes might occur in a healthy adult after kidney donation, our findings of similar long-term survival between donors and healthy comparison patients suggest that these physiologic changes do not result in premature death," write researcher Dorry L. Segev, MD, PhD, of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and colleagues in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Although kidney donors face a higher risk of death in the 90 days immediately following surgery because of the risks inherent in major surgery, researchers say the findings confirm that the practice of live kidney donation should continue to be considered a reasonable and safe alternative to using deceased donor organs.

The use of live kidney donation has increased dramatically in recent years due to a major donor organ shortage in the US. An estimated 6,000 people undergo the surgery to remove one of their kidneys for donation each year.

The study followed more than 80,000 people who underwent kidney donation surgery between 1994 and 2009 and compared them to a matched group of 9,364 healthy participants in a nationwide health survey for an average of about six years.

The results showed there were 25 deaths within 90 days of live kidney donation surgery, with the risk of death being 3.1 per 10,000 donors compared to a death rate in the comparison group of 0.4 per 10,000 people during the same time period.

Researchers found men, African-Americans, and donors with high blood pressure were more likely to die from complications of live kidney donation surgery than others.

By one year after live kidney donation, however, researchers found the risk of death among kidney donors was similar to the healthy comparison group and was attributable to other pre-existing illnesses rather than the surgery.

Overall, the study showed the long-term risk of death was similar or lower among live kidney donors than in the comparison group: 0.4% vs. 0.9% at five years and 1.5% vs. 2.9% at 12 years, respectively.

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


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