



## Kidney Donation: How to make the ask

**The Transplant Institute**

 METHODIST DALLAS MEDICAL CENTER

*“Asking for help is a sign of strength.”*

*Be brave enough to do it.”*



The thought of asking someone to donate an organ can feel scary at first, especially when you aren't sure how to start the conversation. With some preparation, much of the fear and awkwardness can be lessened or eliminated altogether.

We have put together this guide on how to ask for a kidney so that our patients have the best possible chance of finding a willing living kidney donor. Here you will find **tips, strategies, sample scripts and other useful tools** as you begin the process of finding a living donor and making the ask.



## Step 1: Educate yourself

Learn what you can about living kidney donation and transplants. Most people like to have as much information as possible when they are making a big decision and very few people are educated about kidney disease and organ donation.

This is your opportunity to educate them about the process, the benefits, the risks to both donor and recipient, and the beneficial outcomes of living donation. All of this shows that you are knowledgeable and care deeply about how this decision can impact their lives.

Things to consider sharing:



- How kidney disease can't be 'seen'
- There is no cure for kidney disease
- Your condition & treatment options
- The time commitment and toll of dialysis
- Typical wait times on the transplant list
- How paired exchange works



**Tip:** One way to open a conversation is to ask the person what they know about kidney disease and transplantation.

## Step 2: Practice your story

One of the best ways to get comfortable talking about any topic is to practice. The more, the better. Consider writing down your story in full or just the key points of your kidney disease journey. Practice reading it out loud until you are able to stand in front of a mirror and tell your story without notes.

The confidence gained from memorizing your talking points will help you remember the vital information you wanted to share even if you feel nervous.

**Tip:** *To practice the conversation and sharing your story, engage a family member or close friend to listen and then seek their feedback on how it went.*



**“The staff at Methodist Dallas are such pros!  
They put you at ease right away.  
It was evident they were experts.”**

-Doug Kidd, who received a kidney from his son Collin

**“For every part of my mom’s transplant,  
we turned to Methodist Dallas.”**

-Joanna, who donated her kidney to her mom at age 25



## Step 3: Identify your circle

### Start with family and close friends

Don't go it alone! Delegate tasks and share the emotional weight by enlisting the help of supportive family or friends. This allows you to focus on your health while they spread the word. Starting your living donor search in this way has several benefits.

The majority of living donations happen between family (due to genetic similarities) and close friends. Difficult subjects are easier to talk about with those closest to you. Starting with loved ones who will be patient and gracious can help you gain confidence

**Tip:** Find a champion: Consider designating a “donor champion” – a dedicated friend or family member who acts as your spokesperson. This person will be your rock, sharing your story, answering questions, and being the first point of contact for potential donors.

## Expand your search

For many, the search for a kidney will go wider than family and friends. When that happens, creating a plan to raise awareness can make the difference between finding a potential donor or not.

Brainstorm all the groups you're a part of and create a list. A few group examples include:

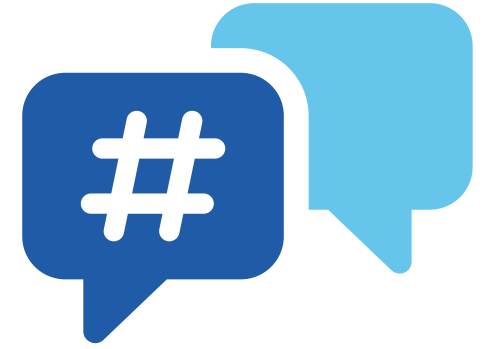
- Church or other religious organization
- Community or recreation centers
- Gyms
- School or alumni organizations
- Employers (current and previous)
- Clubs, organizations, neighborhood groups
- Social media groups or other online communities



## Step 4: Think about how to ask

When you are ready to begin reaching out to your family and friends, give some thought as to how each person would want to have this conversation. Ask yourself, do they prefer face-to-face conversations? A phone call? Or perhaps an email or a written letter, which allows them to read your note and give it some thought before replying, is their preference.

We've provided sample conversation starters to guide your discussions with potential donors. Use these scripts as a foundation, but personalize them to match your individual situation, communication style, and personality.



## Sample scripts for sharing your story in conversation

### *Asking to have the conversation*

*Hello [NAME], I have some important information/updates about my kidney disease that I wanted to share with you. Do you have a preference for how you would like me to get you that information? We can get together for a chat or talk on the phone, or I can send you an email or letter if you prefer.*

### *Starting the conversation*

*"You may not know this, but I'm in kidney failure and on the transplant list for a kidney. Currently, the only cure for this disease is a new kidney. Most people are surprised to learn that it can take many years to get a kidney from a deceased donor. But a new kidney can happen much more quickly if I am able to find a living person to donate. May I share more about my search?"*

**Tip:** *Feeling awkward about being so vocal? Think of yourself as an advocate for organ donation as a whole and raising awareness for the thousands who also need a donation..*

## How to explain life on dialysis

*“I am required to do dialysis treatment three times a week at a dialysis center, and each session lasts four to five hours. The treatments are hard on my body. Sometimes they give me headaches, cause cramping, and make me vomit. But I have to be on dialysis for the rest of my life unless I can get a new kidney”*

## If someone is interested in learning more

*“Donating a kidney is a big decision, and people often have a lot of questions. I am happy to share some information with you, like who can be a donor, what the surgery is like for the donor, and who pays for the surgery. People are usually pretty surprised to learn that for most donors, it is a simple procedure that they don’t have to pay for themselves. What other questions can I answer for you?”*

**Tip:** Ask family and friends to share these materials at places they frequent.

## Step 5: Get creative

In addition to all the traditional methods of spreading the word about your need for a kidney, consider getting creative. There is no limit on how you choose to share your story. It’s simply about raising awareness and finding unique ways that help not only you but organ donation as a whole

- Ask local radio and news stations to share your story or interview you on air
- Create water bottle stickers, bumper stickers, or back windshield decals
- Bumper stickers/back windshield decals
- Create printed materials to share
- Design T-shirts
- Ask to be featured at local sporting events, concerts, festivals
- Pay for a billboard ad
- Arrange a community event in honor of raising awareness. This could be:
  - Dog gathering at a local dog park or trail
  - Community-wide garage sale
  - 5K walk/hike
  - Local high school band showcase

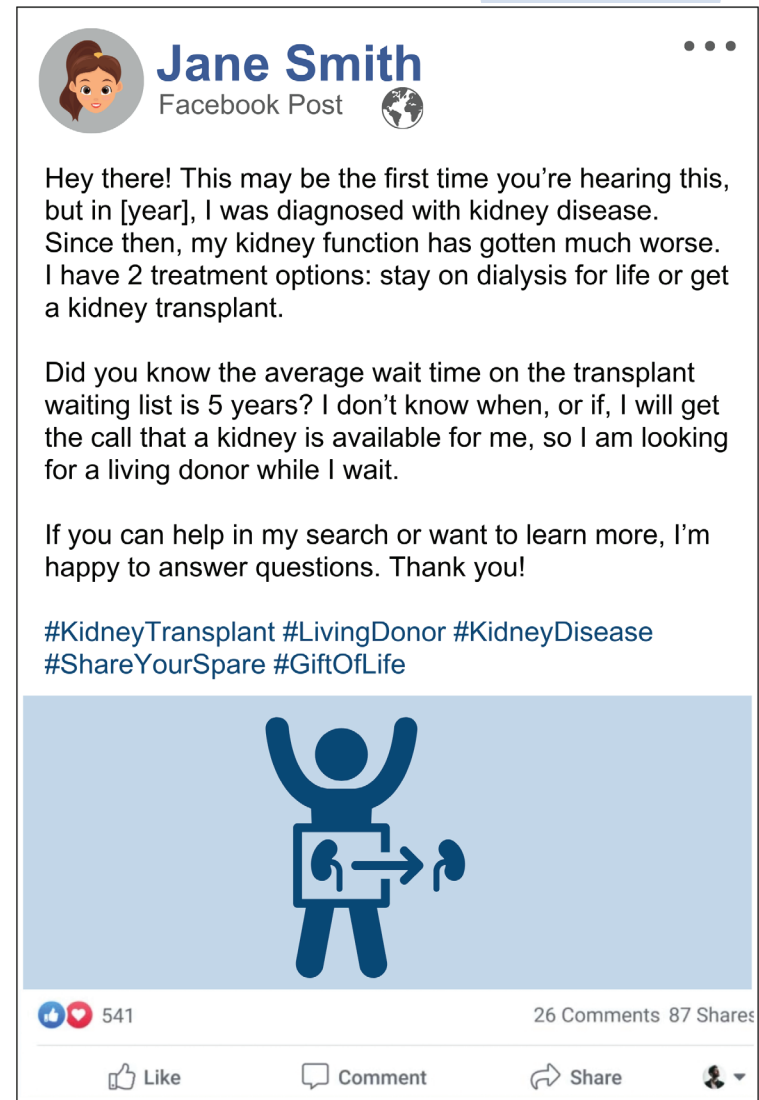
## Step 6: Use Technology

Social media and other technology have created countless pathways to connect with people beyond your immediate family and friends. By making use of this vast networking tool, you can increase the likelihood of finding a kidney donor.

- *Create an email signature that shares your need*
- *Share your story in an organization-wide email*
- *Create a website to tell your story and share the link*
- *Create a Facebook group*
- *Create YouTube video of you sharing your story*

**Tip:** *If you know someone who is good with technology, ask them for help setting up your online presence..*

## Social Media Post Sample



**Jane Smith**  
Facebook Post

Hey there! This may be the first time you're hearing this, but in [year], I was diagnosed with kidney disease. Since then, my kidney function has gotten much worse. I have 2 treatment options: stay on dialysis for life or get a kidney transplant.

Did you know the average wait time on the transplant waiting list is 5 years? I don't know when, or if, I will get the call that a kidney is available for me, so I am looking for a living donor while I wait.

If you can help in my search or want to learn more, I'm happy to answer questions. Thank you!

#KidneyTransplant #LivingDonor #KidneyDisease #ShareYourSpare #GiftOfLife

541 likes 26 Comments 87 Shares

Like Comment Share

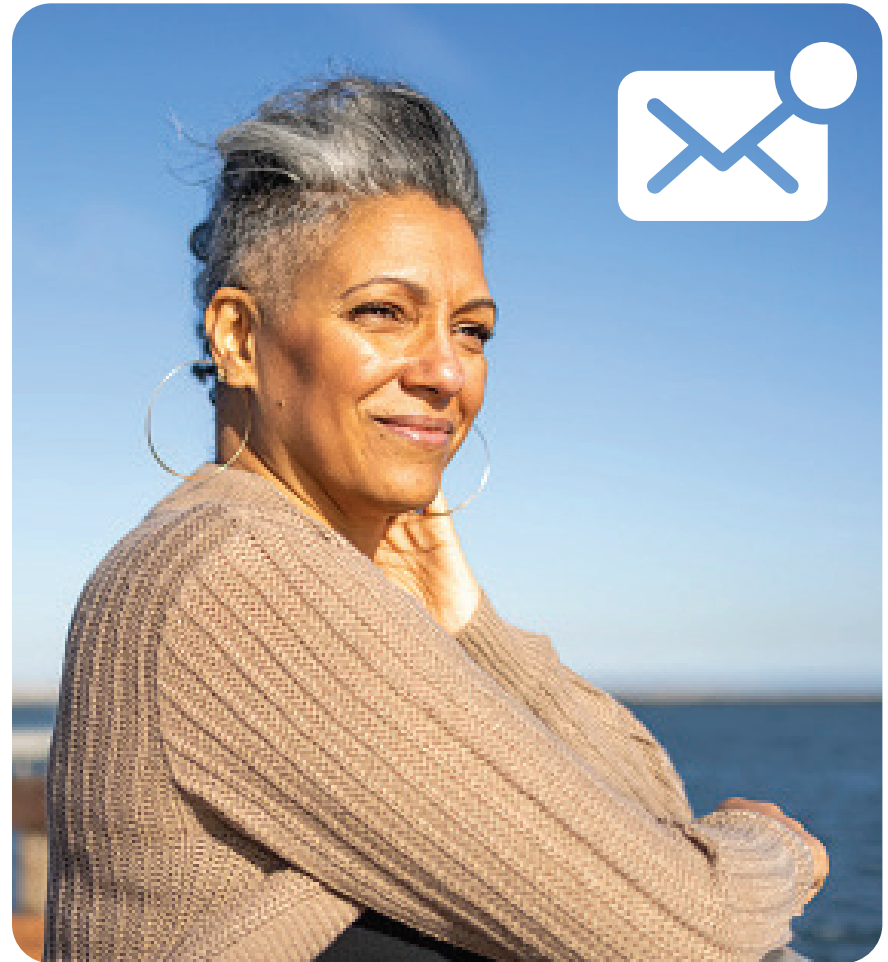


## Step 7: Preparing for a response

It takes courage to ask for a kidney donation, hearing a no can cause feelings of intense disappointment that you may struggle to move on from. It is important to remember, and remind yourself often, that becoming a living donor is a complex decision. Family and friends can love you dearly and deeply care about your circumstances but are still unable to say yes for any number of reasons.

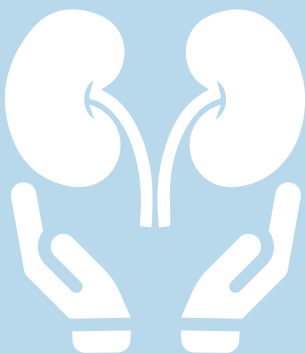
Remember, you are not alone in this journey. By sharing your story with empathy and clarity, you'll open the door for a potential living donor to step forward and offer the gift of life. Take a deep breath, use the tools in this guide and embark on this life-changing conversation with confidence. Every step you take brings you closer to the possibility of a healthier future.

*We Are Here For you!*



**Tip:** Give yourself time to grieve the decision and then recommit to the search. Find a short saying that helps you shift your focus to finding the right person at the right time.





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