

Never too old to donate a kidney?

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People over age 70 years of age can safely donate a kidney, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Clinical Journal of the American Society Nephrology* (CJASN). The results provide good news for patients who need a kidney but have limited options for donors; however, kidneys from these elderly donors do not last as long as those from younger living donors.

Because of a profound shortage in organs for transplantation, patients in need of a kidney face long waiting times and increased risks of dying. In response, patients are turning to older living donors. This brings up an important question: should there be an upper age limit for donation for the sake of both recipients' and donors' health?

To investigate, Jonathan Berger, MD, Dorry Segev, MD, PhD (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine), and their colleagues studied 219 healthy adults over the age of 70 years who donated kidneys and compared them with healthy [elderly individuals](#) who were not [organ donors](#). The researchers looked to see if these older donors put themselves at extra risk of death by donating and having one kidney versus having two. The team also wanted to know if a kidney from a living donor over 70 years of age was as good as other donor organs. To do so, they compared the kidney health of recipients of older [donor kidneys](#) to that of recipients of kidneys from younger donors and deceased donors.

Healthy individuals over 70 years old were no more likely to die within one, five, or 10 years after donating than healthy elderly individuals who

were not organ donors; in fact, their death rates were lower. The organs from elderly donors did not last as long as those from younger [living donors](#), but they lasted just as long as organs from younger deceased donors.

"It is important for individuals over 70 who want to donate a kidney to be aware that many have done so safely. Many [older adults](#) -- and even many physicians -- are not even aware that this occurs," said Dr. Segev. "But it is important for transplant centers to continue to scrutinize all donor candidates, particularly older ones," he added.

More information: The article, entitled "Living Kidney Donors Ages 70 and Older: Recipient and Donor Outcomes," will appear online on October 28, 2011, [doi:10.2215/CJN.04160511](https://doi.org/10.2215/CJN.04160511)

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