

Your Liver's Hidden Superpower

Did you know your liver has a superpower? It's the only organ in the body that can regenerate. Thanks to the liver's unique ability to grow back, people can donate part of it to someone who needs a new one and continue living full, healthy lives.



In fact, you can donate half your liver and in eight weeks, it'll be as good as new and be almost fully regrown.



That's very good news, because the demand for liver transplants far exceeds the availability of livers from deceased donors.



This means someone in need of a new liver can spend months, or even years, on the transplant waitlist. Many don't survive the wait.



Read on to learn the surprising benefits of liver donation and the four things all donors should know.

6 Feel-Good Reasons to Become a Living Liver Donor

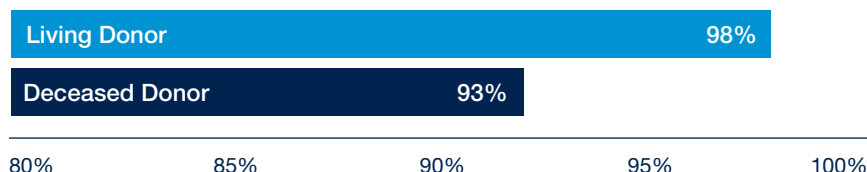


You Can Be a Hero

By donating part of your liver, you can significantly reduce a recipient's time on the transplant waitlist and improve their chances for a successful surgery and a new life. They'll be stronger and healthier going into surgery. They get to prepare for the procedure. And a living donor liver is often healthier than one from a deceased donor because it's transported from a nearby operating room, not a distant hospital.

People who receive their new liver from a living donor have consistently higher survival rates than those who don't.

UCSF RECIPIENT SURVIVAL RATES AT 3 YEARS*



Many people donate to a family member or friend, but you don't have to be related to your recipient or even know them. If you're not a good match for a loved one, we'll help arrange a chain of donations. That way, your loved one could receive a living donor liver from someone who's a good match, and yours will go to someone else in need.



The Cost Is Covered

Even if you don't know your recipient, all your medical costs are covered by their insurance. This includes doctor visits before and after surgery, as well as your hospitalization and recovery care. Ideally, your pay will also be covered while you're off work. Under California law, most employees donating an organ are entitled to paid leave for up to 60 days.

We work with living donors to help close the gap on expenses that aren't covered, such as travel and lodging. We'll connect you with resources like Donor Shield and the National Living Donor Assistance Center, which help donors recoup those expenses.



You're in Expert Hands

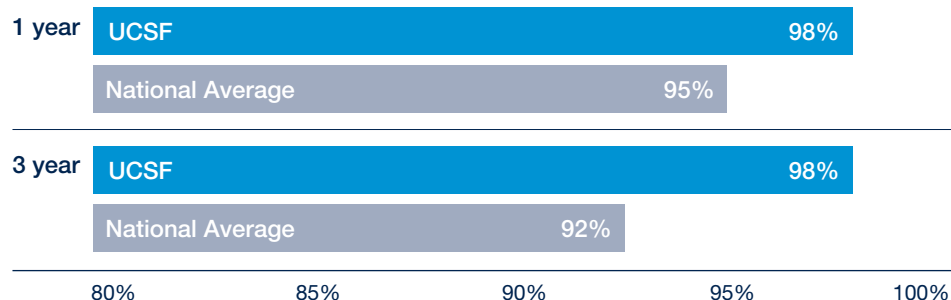
UCSF's Liver Transplant Program is one of the best in the country and is designated a Center of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our surgeons have performed hundreds of living liver donor transplants over the past 30 years and continue to do more than any other medical center in California.

Our Living Donor Liver Transplant Program supports donors through the entire process of evaluation, transplantation and recovery. The team includes surgeons, hepatologists, nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, dietitians, social workers and other providers. Everyone on the team has expertise in caring for both donors and recipients.

In the decades since the first successful living donor liver transplant, surgical and medical advances have made the procedure easier and safer for both recipients and donors. UCSF has been at the forefront of many of those innovations. Our experience and expertise are reflected in our outstanding outcomes.

The survival rates for people who have a living donor liver transplant at UCSF are consistently among the highest in the country.

LIVING DONOR RECIPIENT SURVIVAL RATES*





We're Here for You

UCSF makes sure that being a donor is right for you every step of the way. Living donation is entirely voluntary. That means you're free to change your mind at any point before the surgery. We'll fully support you, whatever you decide.

Potential donors undergo a careful preparation process to make sure they're physically, psychologically and emotionally fit to donate. It includes tests and consultations with doctors, a social worker and sometimes a transplant psychologist. We work to answer all your questions and address any fears.

As an extra safeguard to make sure your interests are fully protected, we also provide you with a dedicated patient advocate. Advocates are not part of the transplant team and have no stake in whether the operation takes place.

We recognize the extraordinary act of generosity involved in a living liver donation. And we honor that by making sure you receive the best possible care.



You Touch Many Lives

Liver failure takes its toll on more than just the patient. It's also hard on family members and friends who are caring for and worrying about their loved one as they wait for a liver. When you become a living donor, you help everyone involved.

That ripple effect spreads even further, because there are not enough livers to go around. Every living donor transplant means one less person waiting for a liver from a deceased donor. The shorter the list, the better the odds for those who are still waiting.

This is especially important in California, where the transplant waitlist is longer than in other parts of the country.



Giving Is Receiving

Living liver donors will tell you they got as much out of donating as they gave. In one survey, 97 percent said they would be willing to donate again; less than 3 percent said they weren't sure. No one said they wouldn't do it again.

This incredible act of selflessness is deeply fulfilling, donors tell us. Katherine, who gave part of her liver to her brother Joshua at UCSF more than 20 years ago, says being his donor was one of the most meaningful things she's ever done, as gratifying as being a mom.



Read more about Katherine and Joshua on p. 5 of this guide.

Am I Eligible to Be a Donor?

Donors must be:

- 18 to 65 years old
- At or able to reach a BMI of 30 or less before surgery
- Willing to avoid consuming alcohol for at least six weeks before and three months after surgery
- A nonsmoker for at least six weeks before surgery
- Not pregnant or intending to be pregnant in the next 12 months
- Not on estrogen-containing birth control
- In good physical and mental health

To learn more and take a look at our screening questionnaire, visit our page on **Becoming a Living Liver Donor** at ucsfhealth.org/living-liver-donor.





It's a big commitment.

We do extensive testing and evaluation to make sure you're physically, emotionally and psychologically fit to be a donor. We'll test your blood and do an MRI, a chest X-ray, an electrocardiogram (EKG) and an ultrasound of your abdomen. You'll also talk with various members of our transplant team.

You may have to take time off work for these appointments. Donors commit to not drinking, smoking, getting pregnant or taking estrogen-containing birth control. You may have to diet to lose weight before the surgery. And in the days leading up to surgery, you'll be taking medication and following a special low-fat diet to clear bile from your liver.

After the surgery, you'll need periodic follow-up appointments for a year to make sure your liver has healed and you're doing well.



You'll have major surgery

The operation takes six to eight hours and requires a large incision in your abdomen. You'll be given general anesthesia during the procedure.

As in all surgeries, there's a risk of complications, though these are uncommon.



You'll be laid up for a while

Most donors spend five to seven days in the hospital following the transplant surgery, and some stay longer. For the first few days you'll have a catheter in your bladder and possibly another tube in your abdomen to drain any blood or bile.

The first few weeks of recovery are uncomfortable. We'll give you pain relief in the hospital, and send you home with a prescription for pain medication. Most donors find the pain fades a bit each day.

At home, you'll want to take it easy for about six weeks – no strenuous activity or heavy lifting. By eight weeks, most donors are fully recovered and able to go back to normal activities.



You'll have a sizeable scar

The incision runs across the abdomen and will vary in shape depending on the lobe of liver removed and the size of your abdomen. In most cases, it heals quickly, leaving a scar that fades over time but will always be visible.

Many donors are proud of their scar and all that it means. Think of it like the "S" on Superman's chest – a sign that you too are a superhero.

10,625

Patients waiting for a liver transplant in the U.S.

600

Living donors who gave a segment of their liver to someone in need last year

1,100+

Patients who die each year waiting for a donation





PATIENT STORY

Good at Sharing

Siblings Katherine and Joshua were always close growing up, even attending college in nearby towns and getting married just two months apart. And for the past 21 years, they've also shared a liver – after Katherine donated part of hers to Joshua.

Joshua was in his 20s when doctors diagnosed him with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a chronic disease that damages the bile ducts and eventually can cause liver failure and increase cancer risks. His condition deteriorated over several years, and in 2001 his doctors determined he needed a liver transplant. At the family Thanksgiving gathering that year, Katherine, then a nurse in Philadelphia, noticed her brother's coloring was off and he seemed lethargic.

Joshua says he felt uncomfortable approaching his family members about becoming his donor, but pushed himself to ask during the visit because his need was so urgent. "It was hard asking them for something that you hoped they would say yes to but wouldn't blame them if they said no," he says.

But when Joshua broached the subject with Katherine, she didn't hesitate.

"You have very few chances in life to do something that's bigger than you," she says. "When you're given the opportunity, you do it."

Katherine

Living liver donor

Joshua lived in the Bay Area, so in May 2002, Katherine traveled to San Francisco for the transplant surgery at UCSF Health. The siblings had adjacent recovery rooms in the hospital and spent the hours after their twin surgeries laughing together. The transplant was successful, both recovered well and two decades later, Joshua is still thriving. Katherine, who already had one child at the time, went on to have another. Years later, she moved to the Bay Area and became a nurse manager at UCSF.

She and Joshua remain very close, but they still have the normal sibling squabbles – which is great, Katherine says, since she donated so Joshua could have a normal life again.



Check out the story on our Instagram page for more photos [ucsfhealth.org/sibling-liver-story](https://www.instagram.com/ucsfhealth)

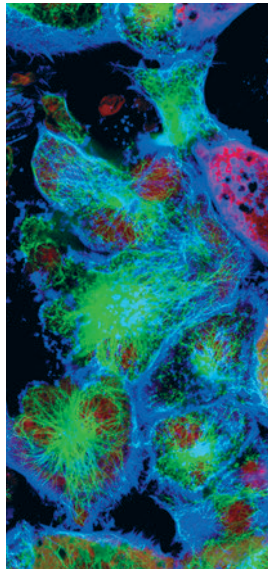


“I never regretted it in any shape or form,” Katherine says of her donation, adding that being a mother and a liver donor are “the best things I’ve ever done in my life.”



UCSF Health

Transplant Service



To learn more about our living donor liver transplant program, visit ucsfhealth.org/living-donor-liver-transplant-program or contact our nurse coordinator at (415) 502-1076 or living.donor@ucsf.edu.