

After you have completed your letter or card:

If you do not know your recipient:

- Place the letter or card in an unsealed envelope.
- Include a separate sheet of paper with your full name and date of your donation.
- Donor families: Mail the materials to the organ or tissue recovery organization.

Living donors: Mail the materials to the transplant center where you made your donation.

With your permission, your letter or card may be reviewed to ensure confidentiality. The recipient may first be contacted to request permission to forward the correspondence. This process may take time. If the transplant recipient does not wish to receive your communication or to communicate further with you, the professional will inform you of that decision.

Keep in mind:

Some recipients may send a letter or card to you in response to your letter. Other recipients may choose not to write to you at this time. This is their personal decision. Many recipients have said they feel overwhelmed with emotion and have difficulty expressing their gratitude in a letter.

For More Information

If you have questions or concerns about the information outlined in this brochure, please contact the National Kidney Foundation or your organ or tissue recovery organization.

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NKF National Kidney Foundation®
Making Lives Better

30 East 33rd Street
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (800) 622-9010
www.kidney.org

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Writing to Transplant Recipients

A Simple Guide for Donor Families and Living Donors



Writing to Transplant Recipients

As a living donor or donor family member, you may or may not decide to write a letter or note to the recipient of your organ or your loved one's organ. It is completely up to you and you should feel no pressure to act in one way or another. The decision to write to a transplant recipient is a personal one.

You should also know that there is no time limit for sending a letter—you may write at any time. If it would make you feel more comfortable, you may choose to send a card during the holidays, or a "Thinking of You" card instead of a letter.

Donor families: If your loved one donated tissue, you may not be able to obtain information about the recipients right away. The transplantation of tissues and eyes is commonly delayed; immediate transplantation is usually not necessary due to the type of surgery being performed, the recipients' condition and the viability of tissue. Your organ or tissue recovery organization can give you more information.

If you decide to write, here are some suggestions:

If you do not know your recipient:

- Write about yourself. You may want to include your name (we recommend first name only) and information about your job, your family and friends, your hobbies and interests, as well as the name of the state in which you reside.

- Avoid including any last names, street addresses, city names, phone numbers or names of hospitals or physicians.

If you are a living donor:

- Write about your personal experiences as a living donor. You may want to include comments on what led you to make the decision to donate and how long you waited between that decision and the actual donation, as well as how the donation experience affected your life.
- Use simple language and communicate in a sensitive manner.

If you are a donor family member:

- Write information you feel comfortable sharing about your loved one. This may include occupation, hobbies, interests, or perhaps special things your loved one liked.
- You may want to write about how making the decision to donate has impacted you, your family and your community.
- We recommend that initially you keep identities anonymous and confidential. Avoid including any last names, street addresses, city names, phone numbers or names of hospitals or physicians.

Getting Started

Here are some sample phrases to jump-start your letter:

If you are a living donor:

- I am feeling well since I donated my kidney. I feel that I made the right decision when I said yes to donation.

- My surgeon let me know that my kidney would go to a person who desperately needed it. It makes me feel good to know I was able to help.
- Once again I find myself writing to you. I do not want to intrude in your life, but I can't help wondering about you. I would appreciate it if you would write and tell me about yourself.
- I am so happy to hear that your health is good and that your body has accepted my kidney.
- I think of you and wish you good health. Please write and let me know how you are doing.
- I waited for you to write and finally decided that I would write to you. I want to know how you are feeling and learn something about you. I will wait to hear from you.
- I was so thankful when I received your letter. It was good to know that you are doing well. I wish you a long life.
- I was very happy to hear from you. Just knowing that you are doing well helps me know that I made the right decision.

If you are a donor family member:

- I find myself writing to you. I do not want to intrude in your life, but I can't help wondering about you. I would appreciate it if you would write and tell me about yourself.
- I think of my daughter's recipients often. Please write and let us know how you are doing.
- I waited for you to write and finally decided that I would write to you. I want to know how you are feeling and learn something about you. I will wait to hear from you.
- Dear Recipients, we would love to hear from all of you as it helps to know that some good came out of our tragedy.