

Australian and New Zealand Paired Kidney Exchange Program

Form 1: Frequently Asked Questions

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ANZKX Frequently Asked Questions

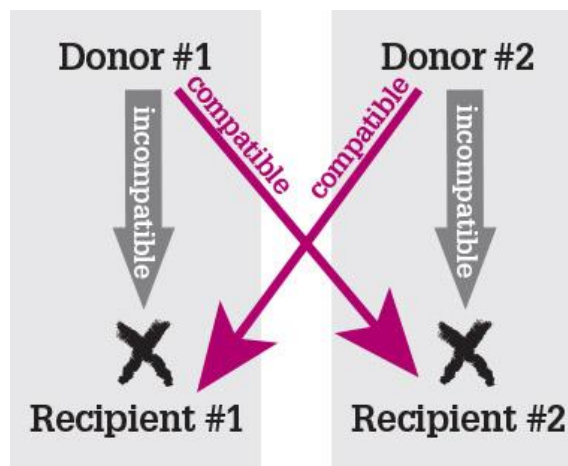
Information for patients and willing living donors

What is the Australian and New Zealand Paired Kidney Exchange (ANZKX) Program?

The Australian and New Zealand Paired Kidney Exchange Program (ANZKX) is a collaborative live kidney donor exchange program that involves Australia and New Zealand. The goal of ANZKX is to facilitate live kidney donor transplantation by helping to match incompatible donor-recipient pairs.

Approximately 30% of potential donors who wish to donate a kidney to a relative or friend are unable to do so due to incompatible blood group or tissue matches. Long-term results from living donor kidney transplants are excellent. Five years after the transplant, 88% of transplants from live donors are still functioning, compared with 80% for transplants for deceased donors.

A paired kidney exchange can happen when a live donor (Donor #1), who is willing to donate to a spouse, friend or relative (Recipient #1), is unable to donate because they have an incompatible blood or tissue type. ANZKX will help find compatible donors amongst other registered pairs (such as Donor #2 and Recipient #2 as shown below), who might be a suitable match, and thus enable two compatible living donor transplants to occur.



How does ANZKX work?

If you have a willing but incompatible living donor, participating in the Australian and New Zealand Paired Kidney Exchange (ANZKX) Program will increase the chance that you will be able to receive a living donor kidney transplant.

Should you agree to participate in the program, your information will be registered in a secure computer database that contains all the registered donor/recipients pairs across Australia and New Zealand.

The computer program searches the entire available database of registered recipient/donor pairs to look for combinations that might enable a suitable kidney exchange to occur. If the computer finds a potential match doctors will arrange for the final tissue typing test for you and your willing living donor.

If no match is found in the first match run (the computer matching), you and your donor will be kept on the register and will be included in further computer match runs. If no match is found after several match runs, your kidney specialist will discuss other options that are available to you.

How can I join ANZKX?

To register with ANZKX you should contact your kidney specialist. You and your willing donor will be asked to:

- have the program explained to you by a medical professional
- sign an Agreement to Participate form stating that you understand this program and agree to participate
- provide a detailed medical history
- undergo a number of medical tests

Who can participate?

If you are a patient who is eligible for a kidney transplant, and are receiving care at a transplant centre/renal unit in Australia or New Zealand, you may be able to participate in the program. You must have a donor who fulfils the medical criteria and is willing to take part in the program and donate a kidney to someone else.

It is also possible for a person who wishes to donate a kidney but does not have a friend or relative who requires a transplant to enter the program as an altruistic, non-directed or 'good Samaritan' donor.

What happens if a match is found?

If a match is found you will be informed by your kidney specialist. Further testing will be required to confirm that the recipient and potential donor are compatible. Once the testing is completed, each donor and recipient pair will meet with their own transplant team to discuss the results and whether to proceed. After discussion, if the donor recipient pairs agree to the exchange, they will sign the appropriate consent forms for surgery.

There is no guarantee that the transplant will occur even if you are identified for a possible donor/recipient exchange. There are many health and emotional issues to be considered in the paired kidney exchange program and the process is complex. You will receive advice and support to help to understand these issues.

What happens if no match is found?

Patients who don't find a matching donor through the exchange program still have the chance of receiving a kidney transplant. If patients are eligible for the deceased donor waiting list, they will remain on the deceased donor transplant waiting list. If no match is found in your first match run, you can remain in the program for subsequent match runs. However if no suitable matches are found after a period of time, you may wish to consider other options after discussion with your kidney specialist.

Where would the transplant take place?

If all parties agree to an exchange, and are medically compatible, the transplant surgeries take place at different transplant centres. Most of the time each donor/recipient pair remains at their own transplant centre. In some cases the option for the donor or recipient to move centre for the surgery might be discussed, particularly if it would help enable a transplant for a recipient who is difficult to match. This would be to overcome logistic barriers. Currently in New Zealand, both the donor and recipient operations will usually occur in Auckland.

All donor operations usually begin at the same time (even if transplants are occurring in different Australian states or in New Zealand). However in some circumstances the starting times might differ by several hours if required to make an exchange possible due to constraints such as logistics, theatre and surgical availability. In the large majority of cases the recipient will receive their kidney on the same day that their willing living donor donates.



Can I contact the other couple?

No. Strict privacy and confidentiality will be maintained for each donor/recipient pair. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Organ and Tissue Donation by Living Donors – Guidelines for Ethical Practice for Health states that anonymity between donors and recipients should be maintained to avoid possible future repercussions for either party.

Can I change my mind after I have joined the program?

Donors and recipients can change their minds at any time until the time of surgery.

What is the chance of finding a match?

The chance of an individual finding a match in the program depends mainly on how difficult it is to find a compatible tissue match. This is based on their antibodies against tissue types as well as their blood group and other factors. Your doctor will be able to give you more information about your specific circumstances.

In certain circumstances, if a patient has more than one donor who is willing to enter the program, they might have a greater chance of finding a match. Only one of these donors will actually donate their kidney if a match is found.

What should I do next?

For more information, ask your kidney specialist. Counselling support will be available to donor/recipient pairs through the transplant centre both before and after the paired kidney exchange.

Where can I get further information?

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