

Carolyn Robinson

In 2001, a routine blood test showed I had an above normal creatinine level. Creatinine is a by-product of the kidneys and when found elevated in the bloodstream indicates your kidneys aren't functioning properly.

I was referred to my nephrologist who explained to me that medication I had been taking for several years had damaged my kidneys. This came as a total surprise to me. I was healthy and feeling well. We were able to stop the medication and substitute another, but my disease continued to progress slowly.

Unlike many others, I did not feel the effects of my poorly functioning kidneys. I continued to feel healthy but had started drinking 3 and 4 beverages with meals and more than that throughout the day. My bladder wasn't functioning properly, but medication alleviated the problem. As the months progressed into years throughout all this my creatinine level continued to rise. Although I understood what was going on, I foolishly kept hoping somehow things would get better.

After 7 years as my kidney function continued to deteriorate my doctor told me I could expect to need dialysis or receive a transplant. He talked to me about the transplant waiting list and then he surprised me and asked if I knew of a friend or relative who would be willing to donate a kidney to me. I couldn't believe it. Here was an opportunity to forego dialysis and the transplant waiting list. But who would I ask? I mean how do you go about asking someone to donate their kidney to you? I thought about this for some time. I was talking to my sister, who was aware of my condition, and explained everything the doctor told me. Right there and then she offered me her kidney. I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe she would be willing to go through all that just to help me. But there it was, she was going to do the unthinkable.

Living in Scottsdale, Arizona, she was tested for compatibility at the Mayo Clinic where she worked which had a transplant program of its own. Her results were sent here to the Westchester Medical Center. My husband was also tested. My husband was not a match, but my sister proved to be an identical match. She

underwent all her pre-transplant testing at the Mayo Clinic and all results were forwarded to the Westchester Medical Center. After a year of preparation, she and her family flew to New York where on a cold January 30th of 2009 we were transplanted. The surgery was a success. She remained in the hospital for 3 days and I was discharged after 5 days. She recuperated at my house for 3 weeks and returned home the following week. I too was recuperating and remained so for another two weeks. She returned to work and I continued my retirement.

It's been ten years, and we are both healthy and thriving. I remain eternally grateful to her and know I could never repay her for all she's done.