To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit organdonation.nhs.uk

A guide to organ donation and Sikh beliefs
Sikhism and organ donation

Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to someone who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people’s lives are saved or improved each year by organ transplants. Organ donation can be donated by people of any age if they have died. The organs that can be donated from a deceased person include the heart, lungs, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be donated to help others.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than ever before are benefiting from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be someone the donor knew or loved dearly. So please take the time to think about becoming an organ donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become an organ donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loved one’s decision.

Sikhism and organ donation

The Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself:

“Where self exists, there is no God. Where God exists, there is no self.”
Guru Nanak (founder of Sikh faith, and first of ten gurus, Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture))

Sikhism and organ donation

Sikh Gurus devoted their lives for the benefit of humanity and some have sacrificed their lives looking after the welfare of others. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

“Within this world take the opportunity for selfless service to others; then in divine abode we get the chance to be.”

Sant Guru says:

Seva or selfless service is at the core of being a Sikh: to give without seeking reward or recognition and know that all seva is known to and appreciated by the Eternal. Seva can also be donation of one’s own body to another:

Rod Jasdev Rai, British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF) states:

“Since the Guru’s death, I have given my life helping sufferers during a smallpox epidemic. It is entirely consistent with his spirit of service that we consider donating organs after death a life and hope to others... in my family we all carry donor cards and would encourage all Sikhs to do so.”

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK

Donating one’s organ to another so that the person may live is one of the greatest gifts and ultimate seva to human kind and hence Satguru says:

“Through selfless service, eternal peace is obtained.”
Guru Granth Sahib

“Donation without reward is one of the characteristics of a Guru’s Sikhs. The life of Guru Gobind Singh Ji is useful because of their natural temperament they are donors. And why not do another can live: an organ so another can live!”
Dr Jasdev Rai, British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF)

The Guru Granth further says:

“Through virtuous deeds, the dead may live in a bond with the living.”

This leaflet had been developed with the input of the Network of Sikh Organisations and contributions from British Sikh Consultative Forum. More information on Sikhism is available from: www.nosouk.co.uk and www.bsclf.org