

Can I donate an organ  
**to someone  
I don't know?**

**Non-directed altruistic  
donation**



[www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)  
[enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk)  
0300 123 23 23



**Yes I donate**  
ORGAN DONATION

There are currently over 5,000 people in the UK waiting for a kidney transplant and more than 500 people waiting for a liver transplant. Every year hundreds of people die waiting for a transplant. Healthy adults can donate a kidney or part of their liver to someone needing a transplant. All over the world, people have been donating one of their kidneys to help someone. You can live perfectly well with only one kidney. Living donation of part of the liver is not as common because the risks are greater for the donor. Most patients with liver disease have a liver transplant from a deceased donor.

In the last few years, more people have offered to donate to someone on the National Transplant list without knowing them. A living person who donates an organ to someone they do not know is called a non-directed altruistic donor. Hundreds of people have now donated a kidney in this way. This is different from the thousands who have donated to a family member or friend. A living person giving part of their liver is less common in the UK than in some other countries. A few people have donated part of their liver as a non-directed donor.

Donating an organ to someone with kidney or liver disease can transform and extend their life – **is it a gift you could consider giving?**



*"It's not often you get the opportunity to make such a significant difference to someone's life. If I had another 'spare', I wouldn't hesitate to do it again."*

A non-directed kidney donor

*"I got my life back"*

A recipient of a kidney transplant

## **Could I volunteer to be a non-directed altruistic living donor?**

People can volunteer to donate to help someone who needs a transplant. Volunteer is the key word – this must be something that you choose to do.

Any adult can volunteer to donate (over 18 years of age in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, over 16 years of age in Scotland). There is no upper age limit and each volunteer is assessed individually.

You will be asked to go through a series of medical and psychological tests. This is so that the medical team can be sure that you are healthy enough to donate. Your health and safety is the top concern. Even if you want to be a donor not everyone is suitable. You may not be able to donate.

As you are a volunteer, you can change your mind at any point – right up to the time of surgery.

## What happens if I volunteer?

You will be allocated a Living Donor Coordinator. They will be able to help you decide whether donating is right for you and will guide you through the entire process. This includes each of the tests and any questions you may have. They will clearly explain the risks of donating to you. The assessment process takes several months. If you are found to be a suitable donor there will be someone on the waiting list who is suitable to receive your kidney or liver.

## What happens to my donated organ?

Our aim is to ensure your donation benefits as many people on the waiting list as possible. If there is a patient with a high priority on the national transplant list your donation may go directly to them. Generally the donors are entered into the UK Living Kidney Sharing Schemes to trigger a chain of up to three transplants. This is known as an altruistic donor chain. Your kidney donation may make it possible for up to three people to receive a transplant. They would otherwise not have had the chance. If you cannot be matched to a patient to start a chain, your kidney is donated to the most suitable recipient on the national transplant list. This is the same national allocation scheme that is used for deceased donor kidneys.

Your living donor coordinator will explain how this works in more detail and you can also read the leaflet 'UK Living Donor Kidney Sharing Schemes' or visit [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk) to find out more.

If you volunteer to donate part of your liver, you will usually donate the left lateral segment of your liver. This is a small part (about 25%) and goes to a child in need of a transplant. Some people can donate a larger part, the right lobe (about 65%) and this is usually donated to an adult. This is less common as the risks are higher than for left lobe donation. Again, your living donor coordinator will explain how this works in more detail.

## Finding out more

**This leaflet will provide you with a general introduction to living donation, rather than detailed information. You will be given more detailed information about the process and the risks to you as you go through the assessment.**

If you'd like to find out more about helping someone by being a living donor, please visit the NHS Blood and Transplant website at [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk). You'll find more information, including answers to frequently asked questions and latest statistics.

You can contact NHSBT by ringing **0300 123 23 23** or emailing [enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk) if you cannot find what you are looking for or need more detailed advice.



The best way to find out more information that is relevant to you is by talking to someone. The living donor coordinators in your nearest transplant centre will be happy to advise you and to provide further information. There is a list of kidney and liver transplant centres on the NHSBT website with their contact details.

It may be helpful to speak to someone who has been through the donation process. There are numerous patient associations that can help you and the web-links to some of these are included on the NHSBT website. In particular, *Give a Kidney* at [www.giveakidney.org](http://www.giveakidney.org) (email: [giveakidney@gmail.com](mailto:giveakidney@gmail.com)) is a Charity that aims to increase awareness about altruistic donation. They provide support for donors who are considering donating a kidney to someone they do not already know.

### **Country specific websites:**

#### **Northern Ireland:**

[www.donatelife.co.uk](http://www.donatelife.co.uk)

#### **Scotland:**

[www.organdonationscotland.org/tell-me-about-living-donation](http://www.organdonationscotland.org/tell-me-about-living-donation)

#### **Wales:**

[www.organdonationwales.org](http://www.organdonationwales.org)