

Frequently asked questions - Living donation

- **Can I donate an organ while I'm still alive?**

Across the UK, more than 1000 people each year donate organs while they are still alive to a relative, friend or someone they do not know.

The most commonly donated organ by a living person is a kidney. A healthy person can lead a normal life with only one functioning kidney and so is able to donate the other to help someone in need of a kidney transplant.

Part of a liver can also be transplanted from a living donor to help someone in need of a liver transplant.

A successful transplant from a living donor is the best treatment option available for most people with kidney disease and they have a better chance of survival than those transplanted from someone who has died.

For all forms of living donor transplants the risk to the donor must be considered very carefully. Before a living donor transplant can go ahead there are strict regulations to meet and a thorough process of assessment and discussion.

All living donor transplants in the UK are regulated by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA). You can find out more about the work of the HTA at www.hta.gov.uk.

- **How do I find out more about becoming a living donor?**

For further information about living donation and how to contact your nearest transplant centre visit our website www.organdonation.nhs.uk/livingdonation.

- **Can I donate a kidney to a stranger?**

Yes, healthy people can volunteer to donate a kidney to a stranger.

You will be asked to undertake a series of tests so that the medical team can be sure that you are healthy enough to donate. Your health and safety is of primary concern and it is important to be aware from the start that, even if you want to be a donor, not everyone is suitable and you may be unable to donate.

- **Can I donate some of my liver?**

Healthy people can volunteer to donate part of their liver to help someone in need of a liver transplant.

You will be asked to undertake a series of tests so that the medical team can be sure that you are healthy enough to donate. Your health and safety is of primary concern and it is important to be aware from the start that, even if you want to be a donor, not everyone is suitable and you may be unable to donate.

It is also important to remember that if you do volunteer, you can change your mind at any point in the process – right up until the time of surgery.

- **How will I know if I am suitable to donate?**

You will undergo a series of medical and surgical tests to check that you are fit and healthy enough to donate. A kidney or part of the liver will never be removed from someone unless the doctors are satisfied that the risks to them, in the short and long-term, are acceptably low.

Some people who wish to donate find that they are not able to do so because of the results of the assessment process. Members of the team involved in your assessment may include doctors, nurse co-ordinators, counsellors, psychologists and social workers. They will guide you through the process every step of the way.

- **How do I express an interest in becoming a living donor?**

If you know the person you are considering donating to, please contact the hospital or transplant centre where they are cared for. They will give you some further information and begin the process for you if you wish to be assessed as a living donor.

If you do not have a recipient in mind and wish to donate anonymously, please contact the living donor coordinator in your local transplant centre who can advise you on the process. There is a full list of transplant centres at www.organdonation.nhs.uk/livingdonation.

- **I've seen an appeal in the paper for a living donor. Can I be tested to see if I am a match for them?**

Donating a kidney to someone specific with whom you have no previous existing relationship is called Directed Altruistic Donation. The likelihood of being compatible with someone whom you identify in this way is rare but may be possible. You should contact the potential recipient's transplant centre for advice and further information. If you do not know where the recipient is being cared for, the living donor team in your closest transplant centre will be able to advise you. A list of all the transplant centres can be found on our website at <http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/livingdonation>. If you find that you cannot donate to the person whom you originally identified, you could consider donating to transform the life of someone else who is waiting on the list.

- **My xx needs a kidney. Can you share their appeal on social media for a living donor?**

NHS Blood and Transplant does not actively promote organ donation appeals for individuals. We strongly advise the person who is seeking a transplant in this way to discuss their situation with their own medical or transplant teams for further advice and support before setting up an individual appeal.

- **What are the cultural views on living donation?**

The UK is increasingly multicultural. If you have any concerns about living donation contact your Community Association Group or community leaders.

- **What are the religious views on living donation?**

Most religions support living donation as they view it as a gift to a loved one. However, if you have any doubt, you should contact your religious leader or place of worship for support and advice.

- **What reward do you get as a living donor?**

Living organ donation is a gift given freely and it is illegal in the UK to donate an organ in exchange for money. However, every country in the UK has a policy which enables donors to reclaim necessary expenses such as a loss of earnings and travel. You should first discuss this with your employer and find out what is available under you (their) terms of employment and Statutory Sick Pay. Please talk to your Living Donor Coordinator about expenses at an early stage of the process if you need to apply to the scheme as there is some information that you will need to read and an application form to complete. A letter from your employer and evidence of your expenses will also be necessary.