

# Organ donation and transplantation FAQs



Questions on organ donation and transplantation may come up throughout your lesson so we have included some frequently asked questions below for you to have at hand while teaching.

Please also see the accompanying in-depth information document for more detail on organ donation – plus tissue, blood and bone marrow donation for context – and visit our website: [organdonation.nhs.uk](https://organdonation.nhs.uk)

### 1. What is donation?

Donation is giving a solid organ or tissue such as skin or tendons to help someone who needs it. Transplants can save or greatly enhance the lives of other people, but this relies on donors and their families agreeing to donate their organs or tissues when they die.

### 2. Why donate?

Through the altruism of donors, NHS Blood and Transplant is able to save and transform countless lives every year. However, there are still not enough organs available.

This is because the number of people who die each year in circumstances where it is medically possible to donate is very small (less than 7,500), and also because the consent rate (the percentage of families who, when asked, agree to donate their loved one's organs) has remained broadly static.

As a result, there are over 7,000 people currently on the active transplant waiting list, and on average three people die every day in the UK because an organ could not be found for them.

### 3. What organ and tissues can I donate?

- Kidneys
- Heart
- Liver
- Lungs
- Pancreas
- Small bowel
- Tissues, including corneas, heart valves, skin and bone.



#### **4. How does a transplant happen?**

NHS Blood and Transplant manages the National Transplant Database, which includes details of all patients who are waiting for or who have received a transplant, and the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR) – a confidential list of people who want to donate their organs and/or tissue.

We match and allocate donated organs in a fair and unbiased way and arrange transport to get the donated organ to the patient.

#### **5. Will doctors work hard to save my life if I agree to donate my organs?**

Yes, doctors always focus on saving lives. Health professionals have a duty of care to try to save life first. If, despite all their efforts a patient dies, their wish to be an organ donor may then be fulfilled.

#### **6. Will they make sure I'm dead before they remove my organs?**

People can only become donors after a doctor pronounces their death. This is the same for all deaths regardless of being a donor or not. Strict guidance is followed in all cases.

#### **7. Is organ donation against my religion?**

All major religions in the UK support the principles of organ donation and transplantation. This includes:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism

You can find more information at [organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation/what-does-my-religion-say](https://organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation/what-does-my-religion-say). If someone is unsure of or uncomfortable with their faith's position on donation, they can ask their religious leader.



## **8. Can people under 18 donate their organs?**

Yes. Children and young people regularly become donors, saving numerous lives every year. Students should have the conversation with their parents if they are thinking about donating their organs after their death. Parents can give consent if they know that it's what their child wanted. Age is also no barrier to joining the NHS Organ Donor Register.

## **9. Will donation leave my body disfigured?**

All organs and tissues are removed with great care and respect in an operating room. Specialist healthcare professionals will make sure you are treated with dignity. Any surgical incision is covered after donation. The arrangements for viewing the body after donation are the same as after death. Your body can be clothed for your funeral with no signs of organ or tissue donation.

## **10. Can older people donate their organs and/or tissue?**

There's no age limit for donating. Healthcare professionals decide to use your organs and/or tissue based on strict medical criteria, not age, and will determine whether your organs and tissues are suitable for transplantation when you die.

## **11. Can I donate my organs or tissue if I have a medical condition?**

Very few medical conditions automatically disqualify you from donating. Medical professionals decide to use your organs and/or tissue based on strict medical criteria. Certain organs and/or tissue may not be suitable for transplantation, but others may be fine. The doctor at the hospital will determine whether your organs and tissues are suitable for transplantation when you die.

## **12. I've heard that people can buy and sell organs. Is that true?**

This is not true. The transplant laws in the UK forbid the selling of human organs or tissue.

## **13. How do I become a donor?**

You can choose which organs you would want to donate when joining the NHS Organ Donor Register. This is a confidential list of people who want to donate their organs and/or tissue to help save or enhance lives.



You can join by:

- Visiting our website: [organdonation.nhs.uk](https://organdonation.nhs.uk)
- Calling us on **0300 123 23 23**.

You can also become a donor by letting your family and friends know what you want to donate, as they will need to make the decision to donate your organs when you die.

On the NHS Organ Donor Register you can also:

- Register not to be an organ donor: You can choose not to donate your organs in the event of your death
- Update your registration: Whether you move homes, change your name or change your mind about donating your organs you can always update your registration with your new details and decision
- Withdraw from the register: You can choose to withdraw your details and decision from the register.

If you live in Wales and you have not registered a decision on organ donation; from 1st December 2015 you will be treated as having no objection to being an organ donor. This is called 'deemed consent'.

