



Fact sheet

Donating after death

What can be donated after death?

Organs

- Kidneys
- Heart
- Lungs
- Liver
- Pancreas
- Small bowel

Tissue

- Corneas
- Skin
- Bone
- Tendons
- Cartilage
- Heart valves

- After death, one person can help as many as eight people by donating their organs. They can benefit many more by donating tissue, such as skin, bone, corneas or tendons.
- The NHS Organ Donor Register is where you record your pledge to donate organs and tissue for transplant after your death.
- You can join the NHS Organ Donor Register at any age.
- While 90% of people say they support organ donation, only 27% have actually joined the NHS Organ Donor Register.
- You need to tell your family what your wishes are because they will be asked to confirm them after your death.
- The donor's physical condition is an important factor. There are only two conditions – known or suspected HIV or CJD – where organ donation is ruled out completely. In all other circumstances, healthcare professionals will make the decision about whether organs and tissue are suitable for transplant, taking into account your medical history.
- Because organs have to be transplanted very soon after the donor has died, they can only be donated by people who have died in hospital. Most people don't die in hospital, but at home.
- Doctors and nurses are committed to doing everything possible to save your life. Organs are always removed with the greatest care and respect.
- Although more than 10,000 people in the UK need an organ transplant, only around 3,000 transplants actually take place each year. More than 400 people die waiting for an organ transplant each year. Around 500 more die because, while waiting, they become too ill to receive a transplant and have to be removed from the list.
- Most donated organs come from people who die while on a ventilator in an intensive care unit following a severe head or brain injury, a major accident such as a car crash, or a stroke.
- Most tissue needs to be donated within 24 hours of death, but more people can be considered for tissue donation because, unlike organ donation, they don't have to die in hospital.