



Student card



Young girl gets a heart transplant just in time

Sally Slater had a heart transplant when she was just six years old. Before then, she had become ill with a virus and rapidly got worse. Her mum, Bridget, took Sally to hospital where she was diagnosed with the virus Coxsackie B, which is similar to the bacterial form of meningitis, and was affecting Sally's heart muscles.

Sally's health continued to deteriorate and her parents were told she needed a heart transplant. They decided to go public with an appeal for a heart donor, trying to raise awareness of Sally's situation in the hope that more people would consider organ donation to help her, and others like her. They had almost given up hope and were preparing to say a final goodbye to their daughter when a donated organ became available.

The operation to give Sally her new heart took seven hours. During that time around eight pints of blood were used – which is the equivalent of 10 blood donations. The operation was successful, and Sally recovered at home in North Yorkshire for just six weeks before going back to school.

Sally is now a healthy, happy teenager.



Sally and her brothers



Sally

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NHS
Blood and Transplant



Fact file

- 1 The youngest baby ever to receive a new heart was just three hours old. The baby was born in America and is now a healthy 18-year-old.
- 2 In the UK, Kaylee Davidson made medical history when she became the youngest heart transplant recipient at five months old. Now nearly 21, she is enjoying life to the full.
- 3 The heart can be used as a whole, or different parts such as the valves can be transplanted separately.

Live debates

Choose one or more of the following statements to debate as a group. Write the arguments for and against the statements and decide which side you are on. Do all the members of your group agree?

- "It is wrong to give a convicted murderer a heart transplant when a law-abiding person also needs it."
- "Only those people who sign a contract agreeing to a healthy lifestyle should be allowed to have transplants."
- "As organs are in short supply you should only get a transplant if you have signed onto the NHS Organ Donor Register which shows that you would also be willing to give your own organs."

Getting into their shoes

- Write a message to Sally from her classmates during her stay in hospital.
- Sally's parents were desperate to find a heart donor to save their daughter's life. They made a public appeal. What do you think they said?
- Hot-seat this scenario: someone opposed to organ donation has spoken out publicly about the 'immorality' of removing organs for transplant from very young babies. Your job is to produce a counter-argument as the Chief Executive of a hospital.