

"I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same"

Dr Bal Mukund Bhala

Co-ordinator Hindu International Medical Mission
Former President Hindu Council UK

Organ donation the gift of life

Today more than 10,000 people in the UK need an organ transplant which could save or dramatically improve their lives. Most are waiting for a kidney, others for a heart, lung or liver transplant.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register and tell family and friends about your wishes.

Join the NHS Organ Donor Register Online at:

www.organdonation.nhs.uk
by phoning 0300 123 23 23
or text SAVE to 84118

Transplants save lives

Information on Hinduism is available from:
www.bbc.co.uk/religion



Compiled by Rachel Howitt, Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust
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NHS

Blood and Transplant

Hindu Dharma and Organ Donation

A guide to organ donation
and Hindu beliefs



This leaflet available
in Hindi, Gujarati,
Punjabi

Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved each year by organ transplants. Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and nurses are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by a doctor or doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs come from people who die from a severe brain injury and who receive treatment on a ventilator in an intensive care unit. The brain injury damages vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. No one can live once these centres have been destroyed. Tests can show conclusively when this has happened.

In some circumstances, patients who die in hospital but are not on a ventilator may also donate. They are called non-heartbeating donors.

Sometimes people who do not die in hospital can become tissue donors.

Consent

The consent, or lack of objection, of those closest to the patient is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important for people to discuss their wishes with their loved ones. Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

Care and respect

The removal of organs is carried out with the greatest care and respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Hindu Dharma and organ donation

There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. *Daan* is the original word in Sanskrit for donation meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten *Niyamas* (virtuous acts) *Daan* comes third.

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life.

Organ donation is an integral part of the Hindu way of life, as guided by the *Vedas*. That which sustains is accepted and promoted as *Dharma* (righteous living). Scientific treatises form an important part of the *Vedas* – *Sage Charaka* deals with internal medicine while *Sage Sushruta* includes features of organ and limb transplants.

"...it is said that the soul is invisible...knowing this you should not grieve for the body."

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:25

"Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile."

The Manusmriti

"The important issue for a Hindu is that which sustains life should be accepted and promoted as Dharma (righteous living)."

Organ donation is an integral part of our living."

Hasmukh Velji Shah, International Trustee, World Council of Hindus

"Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the lives of others."

Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

