



Making a gift of life possible



Organ Donation and Transplantation for Hindus

Hindu Forum of Britain



HINDU
HEALTHCARE
SOCIETY

Working in partnership with the Department of Health



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BAPS CHARITIES
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If you are a Hindu living in the UK, this information leaflet is designed with you in mind.

You may also find it helpful if you are a Jain or Sikh.



Organ Donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to someone who is ill but stands a very good chance of a much better quality of life if they are able to receive a replacement organ or organs. Some organs such as the kidney and a section of the liver can be donated by a living donor. The living donor recovers well after donating by this method and can soon return to normal life.

Organs may also be donated 'after death' and this means that one person who has died can help many by donating organs such as the heart, two kidneys, liver, pancreas, lungs and small bowel. In addition to these organs, tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be donated after death.



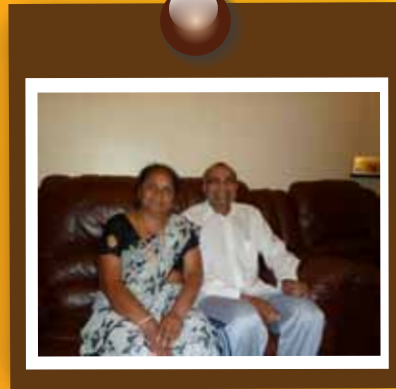
Mahendra Singh, a liver transplant recipient with his wife Sunita

Why do the Hindu communities face a specific challenge when it comes to organ donation?

Well, we face two main challenges. The first is that out of nearly 8000 people currently on the UK active Transplant waiting list, over 2,000 are from Asian or Black background. Most of these are waiting for a kidney transplant. Kidneys fail for a number of reasons, but a very large proportion of kidneys fail as a result of high blood pressure and diabetes. Unfortunately high blood pressure and diabetes are much more prevalent in the Asian communities.

Secondly, we do not have enough Hindus registered on the National Organ Donor Register to meet our need. There are over 17 million people registered on the national Organ Donor Register, but only 1.3% of these potential donors are from an Asian background. Also, organs from people from the same ethnic group are likely to be more suitable. This means that patients from an Asian or Black background have to wait longer for a transplant. For kidneys, we have to wait twice as long compared to a white patient. Unfortunately, many patients on the Transplant waiting list die before they have the opportunity of a transplanted organ.

Kirit Modi with his wife Meena who donated a kidney to Kirit in 2001



Kantaben is the kidney recipient and Ravjibhai is the donor.



The number of donations and transplants have increased over the last three years, but the figures for people from an Asian or Black background have remained the same. The Hindu communities need to take greater ownership of these challenges and we need to work in partnership with others to tackle these challenges.

What can I do to help?

It is simple to help change this statistic and potentially save a life. Firstly, YOU can help do this today by placing your name on the National Organ Donor Register. This is a very simple and quick process and details of how to do this are on the back of this leaflet. Secondly, you can discuss this with your family and friends. Finally, you can raise this issue within your community. We should aim for organ donation to be the norm rather than an exception among Hindus in this country.

What does Hinduism say about Organ Donation?

Hinduism's key principles of 'daan', 'seva', and 'karma' support organ donation and organ receiving - both living donation and donation after death. Hinduism is very clear about the detachment of the soul immediately after death. The following translation of shloka 8.5 from the Bhagawad Gita provides helpful guidance to us.

"The one who, remembering God while dying, totally and unconditionally leaves the dead body, that soul reaches God alone and, in this context, there is no doubt!"

We are delighted to have the following quotes from two prominent Hindu religious leaders.

"In the joy of others lies our own."

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

"The work done here is highly commendable. This is an invaluable service to the community and I would encourage you all to support this noble cause - the gift of Life".

Gauridas, Spiritual Advisor
Hindu Forum of Britain.



Doesn't the process of organ removal interfere with the process of reincarnation?

No. This is because the soul leaves the body immediately following death. Hindus also believe that the soul may remain linked to the material world for 12 or 13 days after death, but it is not part of the body which will have been cremated much earlier than this.

Will my family be involved in the decision to donate my organs after my death?

Yes they will. Thus, it is very important that close family members know about your wish to become an organ donor after death, if you have added your name to the National Organ Donor Register. The gift of organ donation after death is a selfless act and that is why it is called 'the gift of life'. We should all do our best to fully respect the wishes of the person who has died. No donation can take place without the approval of the closest members of the family, even if the person is on a donor register.

What will happen if the recipient of the donated organ is not a Hindu?

Organs donated after death are allocated by the National Health Service to the person on the Transplant Waiting List who is best matched to the donated organ. This matching process does not consider the donor or the potential recipient's faith. However, the donated organ is no longer linked to donor's soul and is also separate from the rest of the body. Therefore the donor has no responsibility for the faith or actions of the recipient of the donated organ. In addition, we believe in the concept of the "world as one family"; so organs would go to a member of the world family.

What is the process for removing organs donated after death?

Organ removal is managed with the utmost dignity by a professional medical retrieval team. The donor's immediate relatives are kept well informed and are given support throughout the whole process. The donor's body is treated with great respect and dignity. As soon as the removal process is complete, the patient's body is available to the family within a few hours after death so that religious and cremation arrangements can be made in good time. Specially trained hospital staff will be on hand to guide close family members through every step of this process.

Can anyone register their wish to become an organ donor?

Yes. Anyone may add their name to the National Organ Donor Register. Even people in their 80s have become organ donors and have saved many lives.

LET US ALL WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A GIFT OF LIFE POSSIBLE

For more information on becoming an organ donor or to add your name to the National Organ Donor Register

please call: 0300 123 23 23
Or go to : www.organdonation.nhs.uk

For more information on kidneys, or kidney disease, please call the National Kidney Federation

Helpline on 0845 601 02 09
Or go to: www.kidney.org.uk

**For general information about issues facing Hindus, please contact
➡ Hindu Forum of Britain on 020 8965 0671.**

**For issues related to health please contact:
BAPS Charities at their email : healthcare.team@mandir.org**