

From spring 2020 the law around organ donation in England is changing

This leaflet explains your choices

What is organ and tissue donation?

Organ and tissue donation is giving your organs and/or tissues to help save or improve the lives of others when you die.

One organ donor can save or transform the lives of up to nine people. Tissue transplants can also significantly improve a person's quality of life. This might be a cornea to help someone see again, a replacement heart valve to treat a heart defect, or skin to treat severe burns.

Why is the law around organ donation changing?

Around three people die each day across the UK in need of an organ, because not enough organs are available for transplant. But only 1% of people die in circumstances that would allow them to donate.

Most people support organ donation in principle and would be willing to donate their organs after their death. However, many people do not make this decision clear either by signing on to the NHS Organ Donor Register or telling their family. The change in law better reflects what most people want to happen and will help save and improve more lives.

What is changing?

From spring 2020, all adults in England will be considered to have agreed to be an organ and tissue donor when they die unless they recorded a decision not to donate or are in one of the excluded groups (see 'Who will this change affect?'). This is commonly referred to as an 'opt out' system.

This means that if you have not confirmed whether you want to be an organ donor – either by recording a decision on the [NHS Organ Donor Register](#) or by speaking to friends or family – it will be considered that you agree to donate your organs when you die.

Organ donation remains an act of great generosity. You still have the right to choose whether or not to be an organ donor. Your family will be consulted about donating your organs when you die.

When is the law around organ donation changing?

The 'opt out' system will come into effect in England from spring 2020.

Until then, if you die in circumstances where you may be able to donate, specialist medical staff will continue to check the NHS Organ Donor Register to see if you have recorded a decision to be a donor. If you have, then your family will be asked to respect this. If you have not registered as a donor, your family will be asked to make a decision on your behalf.

Once the law has changed it will be considered that you agree to be an organ donor if you are over 18 and:

- you have not 'opted out', or
- you are not in an excluded group

Your family will still be involved.

Who will this change affect?

The new law will apply to adults in England, who also die in England.

It will not apply to:

- people under 18
- people who lack mental capacity to understand the new arrangements and take the necessary action
- people who have lived in England for less than 12 months before their death
- people who are not living here voluntarily

What do I have to do?

As the law around organ donation is changing in England from spring 2020, we want everybody to decide whether they want to be an organ donor and to share their decision with their family.

If you **do want to be an organ donor**, you can register to be a donor on the [NHS Organ Donor Register](#).

If you **do not want to be an organ donor**, you can opt out by registering a 'refuse to donate' decision on the [NHS Organ Donor Register](#).

If you have **already registered your decision** on the NHS Organ Donor Register and your decision remains the same, you should [tell your family what you want](#).

If you have already registered, but **want to change your recorded decision**, you can do this simply at any time by completing the ['amend your details' form](#) online.

What is the NHS Organ Donor Register?

The NHS Organ Donor Register is a secure database that holds the details of all those who have registered a decision about organ donation. It records whether or not someone wants to be an organ and tissue donor. For those who want to donate, it records which organs and tissues they want to donate. The Register can only be accessed by specialist NHS staff.

Recording your decision on the [NHS Organ Donor Register](#) and telling your family what you want are the best ways to help ensure your decision is honoured.

Remember, if you are over 18-years-old when you die, are not in an excluded group and have not opted out, it will be considered that you agree to be an organ and tissue donor.

Whatever you choose, it's important to tell your family so they can support your decision. You should also tell them if you change your decision in the future.

To register your decision visit organdonation.nhs.uk

Will my family still be asked about donating my organs after spring 2020?

Yes. The family of a potential donor will always be approached to discuss the option of organ and tissue donation. This helps to make sure that any decision recorded on the NHS Organ Donor Register is your latest known decision. A specialist nurse will work with the family to help ensure this is supported.

Your family can tell us about any particular requests or requirements you may have had to help ensure that organ donation goes ahead in line with your faith or beliefs.

Your family provide important information about your medical, travel and social history too. This information helps to check that your organs can safely be given to someone else.

Find out more about your choices

There is a lot more helpful information about organ and tissue donation on our website:

organdonation.nhs.uk and on social media [@NHSOrganDonor](#)



When you have made your decision, it's important to record it on the NHS Organ Donor Register and inform your family about your choice.

If you can't find what you need on the website or are still unsure, you can call our dedicated helpline:

0300 303 2094

If you are hard of hearing please use our text relay service:

18001 0845 730 0106

To use text chat please SMS:

07860 034 343



From 1 May 2019, anyone with access to the NHS App will also be able to use it to register their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

You can download the NHS App from the App Store or Google Play.



*Hilaria waited ten years for a kidney transplant. She said:
"When I got the call it was like a miracle. I cannot thank
my donor enough for giving me a second chance at life."*

*Andrew donated his wife's organs. He said: "It's a comfort to know that
other people have benefited as a result of Leslie dying. We'd had the
conversation about organ donation, so it was the easiest decision to
make, because I knew it was what Leslie wanted."*

