How to give life?

Organ donation, Let's talk about it!

European Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation (EODD)

With the EDQM, Council of Europe
Kidneys, liver, heart, lungs ... While medicine is progressing by leaps and bounds, waiting lists for patients in need of a transplant are still as long as ever. Today more than 70 000 people in Europe are on waiting lists for a transplant. Every day 12 of them die because of the lack of available organs.

Since 1987 the European member states of the Council of Europe have been working to progress the ethical issues while respecting donors and recipients, to improve the organisational aspects of organ transplantation, and to promote the donation of organs in Europe.
Answers to frequently asked questions

1. Which organs, tissues or cells are transplanted the most frequently?

The most frequently transplanted organs are:
- the kidneys, to remove the need for dialysis;
- the pancreas, to remove the need for insulin injections in certain patients;
- the liver, lungs, heart or small intestine, when these organs are no longer able to maintain the survival of the patient;

As regards tissue donation:
- skin, to treat serious burns;
- heart valves or arteries, due to certain medical conditions;
- bones;
- the cornea, when this thin protective film of the surface of the eye is damaged because of cataracts or an accident.

And cell donation:
- bone marrow, which is used to restore the body’s blood cells after anti-cancer therapy.

2. What transplants are carried out today?

Almost all organs or tissues can be transplanted, and the media regularly covers the progress being made. Modern transplantation techniques currently offer almost unlimited possibilities thanks to research carried out throughout the world, in particular regarding transplantation from living donors. These transplants occur most often between members of the same family. The main advantages of this are the reduction in waiting times, the ability to plan a transplant operation instead of dealing with an emergency, and better quality results.
3. What is the difference between organ donation and whole body donation?

- Organ and tissue donation for therapeutic purposes focuses exclusively on the removal of organs or tissues that medical teams need in order to treat patients whose vital organs (or tissues) are severely damaged or completely destroyed.

- Whole body donation to science is when a person may request that their entire body be used for medical or scientific research after their death.

4. When can a person give their organs or tissues?

- When alive, a person can, under very specific conditions, donate body parts for transplantation: a kidney, for example, or more rarely a part of the liver or lungs, or bone marrow cells or cells from particular organs, skin, cartilage, etc.

- Following death, the possibilities for donation are much wider: the gift of a heart, a liver, both lungs, the cornea, a pancreas, bones... but the donation must be carried out with very little delay, once death has been reported and confirmed by a doctor.

5. Is there a minimum age to become a donor?

There is no age limit; it is sufficient that the organ or tissue removed is healthy. But in the case of a minor, only the parents are authorised to give consent for donation to take place and following special criteria to ensure their rights and the rights of the child are respected.

6. When are organs removed?

Only after a person is legally declared by a doctor to be brain dead. The organs are allowed to continue to function artificially (artificial ventilation and perfusion).

7. How are organs removed?

The transplant team cannot perform the transplantation without first checking that the following conditions are met:

- there are no legal or medical reasons against the donation;
- the person is not registered as being against donation;
- the family has been informed and the testimony of the deceased person on their wishes is always respected.

The removal of organs is a surgical procedure that is performed in an operating theatre following a very strict protocol where all the steps are followed so that the body is returned to the family under the best possible conditions.

8. Are transplantation procedures clearly defined?

In Europe, absolutely. Firstly, because these interventions can only be performed by highly specialised medical teams and in authorised medical centres.

Secondly, because in certain countries hospital co-ordinators are present throughout the process to ensure that the "rules of good practice" are respected.

Finally, because of all the precautions that are taken to preserve human dignity and protect the rights of the donor and the receiver. In fact, national laws in Europe govern donation and transplantation and prohibit the sale of organs, tissues and cells, and ensure the anonymity between donor and recipients is respected.
How to get involved?

At a personal level:
choose to become a donor and make it known.

- Carry an organ donor card: for a card, check with your country’s authorities or with an organ donation association. Some addresses are listed on the next page.
- Register your pledge and talk to your loved ones about your wishes. Discuss your donation decision with your loved ones; it avoids them being faced with a difficult decision after your death.
- Your donation decision is not registered or filed with an official authority. Remember to always keep the donor card with you, preferably with an identity card, if necessary, this is what the emergency personnel and healthcare professionals check first. You can also leave your donor card with a close relative to consult after your death.
- You are always free to change your mind.

Organ donation

SOME STATISTICS:

- **SPAIN**
  35 donors per million inhabitants
- **ITALY**
  22 donors per million inhabitants
- **SLOVAKIA**
  13 donors per million inhabitants
- **GREECE**
  7 donors per million inhabitants.

*A single donor can save several lives!*

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Addresses and useful links in Europe

- **Austria**
  Austrotransplant: www.austrotransplant.at

- **BaltTransplant**
  (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania): www.transplantacija.lt/content/apiemus.en

- **Belgium**
  Belgian Transplantation Society: www.transplant.be

- **Bulgaria**
  Bultransplant: www.bgtransplant.bg

- **Croatia**
  Donor Network of Croatia: www.hdm.hr

- **Czech Republic**

- **Denmark**
  Dansk Center for Organdonation: www.organdonation.dk

- **Estonia**
  Tartu University Hospital: www.kliinikum.ee

- **Eurotransplant International Foundation**
  (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Slovenia): www.transplant.org

- **France**
  Agence de la biomédecine: www.agence-biomedecine.fr and Association pour le Don d’Organes et de Tissus humains: www.france-adot.org

- **Georgia**
  Georgian Association of Transplantologists: www.transplantation.ge

- **Germany**
  Deutsche Stiftung Organtransplantation: www.dso.de and Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung: www.bzga.de

- **Greece**
  Hellenic National Transplant Organization: www.eom.gr

- **Hungary**
  Organ Coordination Office: www.ovsz.hu/hu/oco/cimlap

- **Ireland**

- **Italy**

- **Latvia**
  see BaltTransplant.

- **Lithuania**
  National Bureau on Transplantation: www.transplantacija.lt/content/nuorodos/lietuvoje.en

- **Luxembourg**
  Ministère de la Santé: www.dondorganes.public.lu

- **Malta**

- **Moldova**
  Agentia de Transplant: www.transplant.md

- **Netherlands**
  Nederlandse Transplantatie Vereniging: www.transplantatievereniging.nl

- **Norway**
  Rikshospitalet / Radium Hospitalet: www.rikshospitalet.no and see also Scandiatransplant

- **Poland**
  Poltransplant: www.poltransplant.org.pl

- **Portugal**
  Organização Portuguesa de Transplantação: www.opt.min-saude.pt and Lusotransplante: www.chsul.pt

- **Romania**

- **Scandiatransplant**
  (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden): www.scandiatransplant.org

- **Slovak Republic**
  Slovenské Centrum Orgánových Transplantácií (SCOT): www.ncot.sk

- **Slovenia**
  Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for the Transplant of Organs and Tissues (Slovenija Transplant): www.slovenija-transplant.si

- **Spain**
  Organización Nacional de Trasplantes (ONT): www.ont.es

- **Sweden**
  Swedish Council for Organ and Tissue Donation: www.donationsradet.se, see also Scandiatransplant.

- **Switzerland**
  Fondation nationale Suisse pour le don et la transplantation d’organes: www.swisstransplant.org www.dondorganes.org

- **United Kingdom**
  UK Transplant: www.uktransplant.org.uk
The Council of Europe is the main organisation for the protection of human rights on the continent. 28 out of its 47 member states are also members of the European Union. All the member states of the Council of Europe have signed the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty intended to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.