

# Islam and Organ Donation

A guide to organ donation  
and Muslim beliefs



This leaflet available  
in Urdu, Gujarati,  
Punjabi, Bengali



## 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.

# Islam and organ donation

In 1995 the Muslim Law (Shariah) Council UK issued a *fatwa* (religious opinion) on organ donation. The council resolved that:

- the council supports organ transplantation as a means of alleviating pain or saving life on the basis of the rules of the Shariah
- Muslims may carry donor cards
- the next of kin of a dead person, in the absence of a card or an expressed wish to donate their organs, may give permission to obtain organs from the body to save other people's lives.

The *fatwa* is based on the Islamic principle of *al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat* (necessities overrule prohibition). Normally, violating the human body, whether living or dead, is forbidden in Islam – but the Shariah believes this can be overruled when saving another person's life.

However there are also a significant number of Muslim scholars who believe that organ donation is not permissible and hold the view that this does not fall under the criteria of the Islamic principle of *al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat* (necessities overrule prohibition) due to other overriding Islamic principles.

Both viewpoints take their evidence from the Qur'an and the *Ahaadith* and therefore individual Muslims should make a decision according to their understanding of the Shariah or seek advice from their local Imam or scholar.

The Muslim Law Council UK fatwa draws on one of the basic aims of the Muslim faith: saving life.

*“Whosoever saves the life of one person it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind.”*

Holy Qur'an, chapter 5:32

*“Whosoever helps another will be granted help from Allah.”*

Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)

*“If you happened to be ill and in need of a transplant, you certainly would wish that someone would help you by providing the needed organ.”*

Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi, Principal, Muslim College, London



*Muslim scholars of the most prestigious academies are unanimous in declaring that organ donation is an act of merit and in certain circumstances can be an obligation.*

*These institutes all call upon Muslims to donate organs for transplantation:*

- *the Shariah Academy of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (representing all Muslim countries)*
- *the Grand Ulema Council of Saudi Arabia*
- *the Iranian Religious Authority*
- *the Al-Azhar Academy of Egypt*

## 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](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)**  
**by phoning 0300 123 23 23**  
**or text SAVE to 84118**

## Transplants save lives

Information on Islam is available from:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion)

