

Organ Transplants

If an organ is **severely damaged** it can be **replaced** by a **donated natural organ**. In a transplant, a healthy organ such as a heart or liver is taken from one body (**the donor**) and put into the patient to replace the organ that no longer works properly.

Organ donations

1. **Living donors** can donate certain organs. For example, you can donate one of your two **kidneys** and live with just one, or you can donate a piece of your **liver**.
2. Organs can be **transplanted** from people who have **recently died** or who are **brain dead**, but the **family's consent** is needed before the organs can be used for a transplant.

Some people say it should be made **easier** for doctors to use organs from people who have died. One suggestion is to have an **opt-out system** where anyone's organs can be used **unless** the person has **registered** to say they **don't** want their organs to be donated.

Each year in Britain over 1000 people die waiting for transplants because there is a **big shortage of donor organs**.

Doctors must make scientific decisions based on the likelihood of the transplant being a success.

Science Criteria for transplants

These include whether the patient and donor:

- **Have similar tissues** – the closer the tissue match the more likely the transplant will be a success
- **Are similar ages** – a child's organ is less likely to be transplanted successfully in an adult and vice versa.

Ethical Criteria for transplants

Ethical criteria are based on what is **right or wrong**. Some people are **less likely** to get an organ transplant if they are unlikely to survive the operation. Other people may only be considered if they **change their lifestyle**. For example:

- People with **cirrhosis** of the liver might not be considered for a **liver transplant** unless they **stop drinking** as more alcohol would **damage** their new liver
- Being **obese** can damage the heart. So some hospitals will **not perform** heart transplants on **obese** people unless they **diet and lose weight**. Obese people also have a greater risk of **dying after surgery** so they might also have to lose weight for other transplants, e.g. liver.

Some people think that those who have **harmed** their own organs **don't deserve** an organ transplant as much as those people whose organs have been damaged through **illness**. In a recent poll **47%** of the public said alcoholics **should not** be given a liver transplant. However, transplant guidelines are not based on who **'deserves'** a transplant, but who is most likely to **benefit**.