How does organ transplant surgery work?

Most donated organs for transplant come from donors who have died, but some organs come from living donors, who give a kidney or part of their liver.

To donate organs after death, a person needs to die in hospital in specific circumstances, such as after a serious accident or brain injury.

Doctors always do everything they can to save a patient. Organ donation is only ever considered if all efforts to save the patient's life are unsuccessful.

The decision to donate organs will only be made after the patient's family and doctor have discussed, and agreed, that recovery is no longer possible and to withdraw life-sustaining treatment. Or, if the patient has been declared dead through brain stem death tests, and is still on a ventilator.

A specialist nurse will check if the patient was a registered organ donor. If they were, the nurse will sensitively discuss this with the family who will be asked to support this decision,and if the patient had not made their wishes known, they will be asked to make a decision on their relative's behalf.

Once the patient's family have confirmed that organ donation can go ahead, a number of tests will be conducted, and some personal information will need to be gathered in order to confirm that it's safe to transplant the patient's donated organs into other people.

Organs are then matched and allocated based on different factors including waiting time, urgency and clinical reasons such as tissue type, size and blood group.

Transplant teams may also decline organs offered for transplantation from donors if they don't feel they are suitable for their patient, based on the information they have available to them.

In this situation, the organ would be offered to the next most appropriate patient.

The patients receiving these organs are given another chance at life that they wouldn't have been given without the donor and their family.

Sign up now and tell your family you want to give the gift of life

Yes I donate ORGAN DONATION | organdonation.nhs.uk | 0300 123 23 23 | NHS Blood and Transplant