

Altruistic living kidney donation



Your **questions answered**

0300 123 23 23

www.organdonation.nhs.uk

This leaflet provides information if you are considering altruistic living donation. It is important that you read this leaflet together with the Human Tissue Authority leaflet *Information about living-donor transplants*, and all of the other information you receive so that you are fully informed about what is involved for the living donor and the person who receives the organ.

What is **the Human Tissue Act**?

The Human Tissue Act 2004 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 provide the legal framework for organ and tissue donation in the UK. The rules set out by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) allow more flexibility in who can be a living kidney donor and who can donate to whom. This means that more people with kidney failure can benefit from a living donor transplant. One of these additional options is non-directed altruistic donation.

As part of the Human Tissue Act the HTA must approve all transplant operations involving living donors following an independent assessment.

What is **non-directed altruistic donation**?

This is where a person volunteers to donate a kidney to an unknown recipient, that is, someone they have never met before and who is not known to him/her. Non-directed altruistic donation is currently used only for kidney transplantation.

The benefit of this type of donation is that a patient on the transplant list receives a living donor kidney transplant and the number of patients on the waiting list is reduced overall. This in turn increases the chances of other potential recipients receiving a kidney from a deceased donor.

What would I have to do if I want to be an altruistic donor?

You would need to contact your local transplant centre for more information. A list of transplant units can be found at www.organdonation.nhs.uk After further discussion, if you decided to pursue the idea of altruistic donation, you would be assessed in exactly the same way as any other living kidney donor, according to nationally agreed guidelines (see *Could I be a living kidney donor?*). In addition, there would be a mandatory mental health assessment. Your evaluation could either be performed at your local kidney transplant centre or at another centre of your choice.

Are there any special considerations I should think about?

The altruistic donor does not have an emotional tie with the potential recipient of the transplant which means that the donor does not directly experience the pleasure of seeing a loved one benefit from the gift of his/her donation. Whilst this may not present a problem for you, it is important that you consider this aspect carefully before deciding to go ahead with the operation.

How does the process work?

If the transplant team agrees that you are a suitable donor, you will then need to be assessed by a local Independent Assessor (trained and accredited by the Human Tissue Authority) who can recommend to the HTA that the transplant operation should be approved. If approval is received, that is, if all of the legal requirements under the Human Tissue Act have been met, your details will be sent to the UK Transplant Registry. No more than two working days later, the most suitable recipient on the national kidney transplant list will be identified. This is done according to the same criteria used to identify recipients for kidneys from deceased donors. It is up to the donor to advise when he/she is ready to be entered into the scheme so that HTA approval and a transplant operation can be planned at a convenient time. Altruistic donors are free to change their mind about donating at any point up to the transplant.

What happens once a **potential recipient has been identified for my kidney?**

The donor and transplant operations are planned between the transplant centres involved so that the donated kidney can be transplanted into the intended recipient on the same day with the minimum of delay. The donor and recipient usually have their operations in their local transplant centre and special arrangements are made to transport the donated kidney quickly between the two centres.

If an altruistic donor wishes to have his/her surgery at a different transplant centre, it may be possible to make alternative arrangements. The transplant is likely to take place within two to three months of a suitable recipient being identified, but this time will vary according to a number of factors.

Anonymity of the donor and recipient prior to the operations is essential. Living donor co-ordinators may be willing to pass on correspondence between donors and recipients afterwards. This is similar to the way in which recipients who receive an organ from the national transplant list keep in contact with their donor families through their local transplant co-ordinators, should they wish to do so.

For **further information**

Could I be a living kidney donor? NHS Blood and Transplant, October 2004, updated June 2006. Available from Donor Line on 0300 123 23 23 or www.organdonation.nhs.uk

Information about living donor transplants, Human Tissue Authority, updated October 2007. Available from your local Transplant Unit or www.hta.gov.uk

UK Guidelines for Living Donor Kidney Transplantation, British Transplantation Society/ Renal Association, 2nd edition, April 2005. Available from www.bts.org.uk