

Organ donor - yes or no?

A new organ can save or prolong the life of patients with chronic kidney, heart, liver or lung failure. A new organ can give back a normal life with school, work, family and children to seriously ill patients.

Organs from brain dead people can be used for transplantation.

In Denmark, express consent has to be given to organ donation if the organs are used for transplantation.

If the deceased has not decided whether to be an organ donor or not, the relatives will have to make the decision.

It can be very difficult to make a decision on your behalf. They are already in a difficult and vulnerable position. Therefore, it is important to know your position.

The point is to know your position to be able to respect this in case of brain death.

In Denmark, all people above 18 years of age are therefore encouraged to decide whether they want to be organ donors or not.

You can change your decision at any time if you change your mind.

What does the law say?

Denmark had a new law on organ donation in 1990. The brain death criterion was introduced, which means a person is dead if the brain no longer functions/reacts. These rules are part of the Danish Health Act, law no. 546 of 24 June 2005 with subsequent changes (Sundhedsloven, lov nr. 546 af 24. juni 2005 med senere ændringer).

According to the law no organs can be removed unless the deceased or relatives have consented to this.

If the position of the deceased is not known, the relatives will be asked to decide.

Organs cannot be bought or sold in Denmark.

According to the law it is illegal to buy or sell organs in Denmark.

It is also illegal to use bought organs.

All organs used for transplantation in Denmark are from persons who have personally or through relatives consented to be organ donors.

A patient who needs transplantation cannot buy an organ or have a bought organ transplanted in Denmark.

ORGAN DONATION

Information on organ donation and how to make and communicate the decision to become an organ donor or not.



Life with a new organ

Patients who receive a new organ will typically return to a normal life after the transplantation although they have to take medicine for the rest of their life.

Most transplanted patients feel they get a good life and they feel much better than before they received a new organ.

The survival of patients with a new organ is increasing. Four to five years after the transplantation of a heart, liver, lungs or kidneys, 80-90% of the patients live with their new organ.

Different options of decisions

To make a decision about organ donation you or your relatives can:

Give full consent

This means all your organs may be used for transplantation.

Full consent may also include meniscus, ligaments, cartilage and tendons.

Give limited consent

This means some of your organs may be used.

State "do not know"

This means you have not decided, and your relatives must make the decision for you.

Say no

This means none of your organs may be used for transplantation.

Communicate your decision

When you have decided whether to be an organ donor or not, you can communicate your decision in three ways. You can:

In writing

- Fill in a donor card
- Register in the Danish Donor Registry

Orally

- Tell your closest relatives about your decision.

Everybody above 18 years of age with a Danish civil registration number can re-

There is no fixed age limit for being an organ donor.

Some organs from older people cannot be used due to e.g. arteriosclerosis – primarily affecting the heart; on the other hand kidneys and corneas from 70-80-year-olds are suitable for transplantation.

The health condition of the brain dead person before the accident or disease also plays a role.

It will always be based on a medical evaluation whether organs can be used for transplantation or not.

gister in the Danish Donor Registry or fill in a donor card.

If you register in the Danish Donor Registry you do not need to fill in a donor card.

In the event brain death affects a person below the age of 18 years, the parents/custody holder will be asked to make the decision about organ donation.

When is a person dead?

Brain dead persons can be organ donors according to the brain death criteria.

A brain dead person is not just unconscious; a brain dead person will never wake up again. But when is a person dead?

Most people die because the heart stops beating and respiration stops. A doctor determines a person is dead because the heart has stopped and cannot be restarted. This is called cardiac death. In this case blood circulation stops and all the organs of the body will start to perish.

In some cases the brain dies first. A brain dead person can never be brought back to life. The heart only beats because the deceased is attached to a ventilator. Even in this way the organs can only function for a short time.

A person is declared brain dead only after two specialist doctors have performed a specific brain death examination procedure consisting of an extensive

number of tests to determine if a person is brain dead.

The tests are repeated after at least one hour and first then the doctors declare the person brain dead.

Brain death can occur as the result of stroke, accidents with major injuries to the brain, progressive brain tumors or as a result of lack of oxygen supply to the brain following cardiac arrest. These events will stop the blood supply to the brain and brain function will then stop.

If the deceased or the relatives have consented to organ donation, the deceased will remain on the ventilator until the organs are removed. The continued function of the heart and blood circulation ensures the organs do not perish.

If the deceased or the relatives have not consented to organ donation, the doctors will turn off the ventilator.

Questions about organ donation?

If you have any other questions regarding organ donation, please consult the website sundhedsstyrelsen.dk

Saying goodbye

It is always possible to say goodbye to the deceased at the hospital regardless of the deceased is to be an organ donor or not.

In persons who have consented to be organ donors, the relatives can say goodbye to the deceased before or after the organs have been removed. If before the deceased will still be attached to a ventilator. This means the chest moves (due to the respiration ensured by the ventilator) and the deceased will feel warm.

Saying goodbye after the organs have been removed: It can take up to 12 hours from the decision has been made until the operation is finished.

This is because of the many arrangements to be made prior to the operation

and because the actual removal of the organs may take some time.

In the operation room the surgeons will remove the organs the deceased or the relatives have consented to donate; the ventilator is turned off in the operation room. Finally, the wound will be closed as in any other surgical procedure. The deceased will stay at the hospital where the relatives can say goodbye.

When the deceased or the relatives have not consented to donate organs, the ventilator will be turned off and no organs will be removed.

The relatives can be present when the doctor turns off the ventilator and afterwards they can say goodbye to the deceased.

