

**organ donation compromises the special honour accorded to man and this cannot be allowed whatever the cost. Scholars, such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy of India, allow live donations only."**

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

- 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 donor card or an expressed wish to donate their organs, may give permission to obtain organs from the body to save other people's lives

- organ donation must be given freely without reward, trading in organs is prohibited

- this is supported by Muslim scholars from some of the most prestigious academies of the Muslim world who call upon Muslims to donate organs for transplantation. These include:

- the Islamic Fiqh 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

Therefore it is very clear that in Islam:

**"Organ donation is a very personal choice and one should consider seeking the opinion of a scholar of their choosing."**

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

That said, one of the fundamental purposes of Islamic law is the preservation of life. Allah greatly rewards those who save the life of others.

To help in this matter the reader's attention is drawn to the following life-saving Fatwa:

In 1995, the UK-based Muslim Law (Shariah) Council resolved that:

- the medical profession is the proper authority to define signs of death
- current medical knowledge considers brain stem death to be a proper definition of death
- the Council accepts brain stem death as constituting the end of life for the purpose of organ transplantation



### How do I become a donor?

If you decide you would like to become a donor on your death, you need to join the NHS Organ Donor Register to ensure your wishes are recorded. Discuss your decision with those closest to you so that they are aware of your wishes. Adding your name to the register is simple and quick:

You can register online at [organdonation.nhs.uk](http://organdonation.nhs.uk)

Or call **0300 123 23 23**

To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit [organdonation.nhs.uk](http://organdonation.nhs.uk)

# Organ donation and religious beliefs

**A guide to organ donation and Muslim beliefs**

# Islam and organ donation

## 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 or improved 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.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

## Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than before now suffer from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow that person could be someone you know and love dearly. So please take the

time to think about becoming an organ donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

## Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

## When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and their colleagues 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 doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs in the UK come from people who die from a severe brain injury, and who are on a ventilator in an Intensive Care Unit. The brain injury will have damaged the vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. Doctors call this 'brain

stem death'. This is not the same as being in a coma or 'persistent vegetative state'. Tests are carried out to strict guidelines to show conclusively when this has happened. When brain stem death is pronounced the patient may still be on a ventilator, and have a heart beat which continues to circulate blood around the body. This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply which is necessary for a healthier transplanted outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people whose death has been certified because their heart has stopped. Certification in these 'non-heart beating' donors is also by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

## Care and respect

The removal of organs and tissues 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 Islam there are two schools of thought with regard to organ donation. The human body, whether living or dead, enjoys a special honour and is inviolable, and fundamentally, Islamic law emphasises the preservation of human life. The general rule that '**necessities permit the prohibited**' (al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat), has been used to support human organ donation with regard to saving or significantly

enhancing a life of another provided that the benefit outweighs the personal cost that has to be borne. The following are some verses which have been used to support organ donation:

**"Whoever saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."**

Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, vs. 32

**"Whoever helps another will be granted help from Allah."**

Prophet Muhammad (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

An alternative view clearly states that:

**"The saving of life is not absolute, but subject to the amount of cost that has to be borne. Therefore, although the above quotation enjoins the saving of life this is not without restriction or caveats.**

**"According to a similarly large number of Muslim scholars organ donation is not permitted. They consider that**

**"Whoever saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."**

Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, vs. 32

