

# Organ Donation Qatar

A gift that lasts a lifetime.

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In the name of Allah, most Gracious, most Merciful

# “He who saves a life, it is as if he saved all mankind”

(Holy Qur'an 5:32)

Transplants are one of the most miraculous achievements of modern medicine. But they rely entirely on the generosity of donors and their families who are willing to make this life-saving gift to others.

One donor can save the life of several people and the more people who pledge to donate their organs and tissue after their death, the more people stand to benefit. By choosing to join the Organ Donor Registry in the Qatar Organ Donation Center, you could help to make sure life goes on for many others.

Joining the Registry records your agreement to donate your organs and tissue for transplantation after your death.

When you register it is important that you tell those closest to you about your decision so they can ensure your wishes are followed in the event of your death.

Deciding whether or not you wish to become a donor is something very personal. This booklet contains answers to the most commonly asked questions about organ and tissue donation and aims to resolve any doubts you might have about leaving a legacy of life for others after you die.

## Organ Donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone who has a failing organ that needs to be replaced. It saves someone else's loved one and it gives other people a healthy longer life.

## Types of Organ Donation

- Deceased Donation (donation after death).
- Live Organ Donation.

## Deceased Donor

Donating organs after death can save many lives. Donating organs from the deceased donor may also help remaining family members cope with the loss of their loved one. It helps them discover a purpose in the tragedy, and gives them a sense that their loved one continues to live through another.

Qatari law follows international law on the criteria for pronouncing someone as clinically dead, which is when brain activity ceases completely and irreversibly. This includes cases where life support systems are maintaining involuntary activity needed to sustain life, such as breathing and having a heartbeat. Because the heartbeat and respiration of the patient is maintained with the life support system, when life support is removed, the heart and respiration stops functioning.

The diagnosis of brain death, according to Emiri Law Section 7.1 states that ascertainment of death is done rigorously by three specialist doctors, one of whom is a neurologist. Neurological examination is completed in order to ascertain that the condition is irreversible and the patient is dead and not merely comatose.

Only when a patient is pronounced dead would they be considered as an organ donor.

## Live Organ Donation

Individuals can donate one of their two kidneys and part of their liver while they are still alive, to save or significantly improve the quality of another's life.

If there is a strong genetic match between donor and transplant candidate this lessens the risk of rejection; family members make the most viable donors. If the donor is a relative this also means the transplant candidate spends less time on the waiting list for a viable organ.

This is particularly important in the case of a kidney transplant because, while the patient is waiting for an organ, they would continue to be on dialysis, a necessary intervention which is associated with poor quality of life and where the patient is exposed to the risk of infection.

## Advantages of the Transplantation and Donation Services in Qatar

1. Qatar Center for Organ Transplantation has a very good record. It gives a safe and high quality service, which is benchmarked against international standards. It is accredited by United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) a private, non-profit organization in the United States that manages the nation's organ transplant system.
2. There is one waiting list for organ transplantation for Qatari and non-Qatari citizens. This feature is distinct to Qatar and differentiates the program from that of other neighboring countries.
3. All procedures related to organ donation and transplantation in the State of Qatar are free of charge for both Qatari and non-Qatari citizens.

## Doha Donation Accord

An exemplary model of organ donation promotion has been developed in Qatar and it has become an internationally respected example. It rewards the gift of life through respect, appreciation and recognition.

1. The organ donors and their families are awarded the Medal of Honor by the highest authorities of the State of Qatar.
2. Living donors (kidney or part of the liver) are offered the following:
  - Medical insurance for life.
  - Compensation for any health problems, should they occur.
  - Life insurance.
  - Priority to receive a kidney transplant if they experience renal failure in the future.
  - Other privileges offered by Qatar governmental and non-governmental institutions, for example, discounted flight tickets with Qatar Airways.
  - All organ donation expenses are covered, including hospital expenses, transportation, residence, mobile phone communications etc.
  - Compensation will be paid to the living donor for the loss of earnings during the period of organ donation.
3. Deceased donors are given the following:
  - Families of deceased donors will be honored at the Medals of Honor ceremony.
  - Families of deceased donors will be provided with social care and support, according to their social state assessment.
  - The body of the deceased donor will be transferred free of charge to their country of origin, if they are an expatriate.
  - The family of the deceased donor, if they are expatriates, will be offered a free flight ticket to accompany the body from Qatar to their country of origin.

## Religious Views

### Islam

Islam believes in the principle of saving human lives. In one article, Islamic Views on Organ Transplantation, it says: “...the majorities of the Muslim scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic law have invoked the principle of priority of saving human life and have permitted organ transplantation as a necessity to procure that noble end.”

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### Christianity

Christianity believes that the Lord demonstrated with his own life how, even in sorrow, love enables them to embrace the needs of others. The decision to donate organs to save the lives of others after death is the beginning of healing for many.

### Judaism

According to Judaism, “If one is in the position to donate an organ to save another’s life, it’s obligatory to do so, even if the donor never knows who the beneficiary will be.”

### Buddhism

Buddhists believe that organ and tissue donation is a matter of individual conscience, and they place high value on acts of compassion.

### Hinduism

Hindus are not prohibited by religious law from donating their organs. This act is an individual’s decision. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that part of a human, dead or alive, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What organs can be transplanted in Qatar?

Kidneys and the liver can be transplanted in Qatar. Techniques are improving all the time and we hope to soon be able to transplant other organs to help even more people.

### 2. What is tissue donation?

After death you can donate tissue such as corneas and heart valves to help others. Every year thousands of people with a severe eye disease or injury have their sight restored by donated corneas. Heart valves are used to help children born with heart defects and adults with diseased or damaged valves. Most people can donate tissue and, unlike organs, it is possible to donate up to 48 hours after a person has died.

### 3. Why are more donors needed?

Every day three people die while waiting for an organ transplant and many others lose their lives before they even get on to the transplant list. There is a serious shortage of organs and the gap between the number of organs donated and the number of people waiting for a transplant is increasing.

The number of people needing a transplant is expected to continue to rise steeply due to an ageing population leading to an increase in kidney failure, and scientific advances which mean that more people are now able to benefit from a transplant. However, the number of organs available for transplant has remained static over the past five years. Only a very small number of people die in circumstances where they are able to donate their organs.

The numbers of people, particularly younger people, dying in these circumstances is falling, mainly because of welcome improvements in road safety, medical advances in the treatment and the prevention of strokes in younger people.

Another major reason for the shortage of organs is that many people have not recorded their wishes to be a donor or discussed it with their families.

While only a very few people die in circumstances which would enable their organs to be donated, many people can donate tissue after their death.

#### 4. How do they know you are really dead?

Organs are only removed for transplantation after a person has died. Death is confirmed by doctors at consultant level who are entirely independent of the transplant team. Death is confirmed in exactly the same way for people who donate organs as for those who do not.

Most organ donors are patients who die as a result of a brain hemorrhage, severe head injury, or stroke and who are on a ventilator in an intensive care unit. In these circumstances, death is diagnosed by brain death. There are very clear and strict standards and procedures for doing these tests and they are always performed by three experienced doctors.

The ventilator provides oxygen which keeps the heart beating and blood circulating after death. These donors are called 'heart beating donors'. Organs such as hearts, which deteriorate very quickly without an oxygen supply, are usually only donated by a heart beating donor.

Patients who die in hospital but are not on a ventilator can, in some circumstances, donate their kidneys, and occasionally other organs. They are called 'non heart beating donors'.

Both heart beating and non-heart beating donors can donate their corneas and other tissue.

#### 5. Can they keep you alive with machines?

No. The patient is dead. A ventilator keeps the body supplied with oxygen and this means the heart will continue to beat and circulate blood. This preserves the organs so they can be donated for transplant. When the ventilator is turned off the heart will stop beating within a few minutes.

#### 6. Will they just let you die if they know you want to be a donor?

No. Doctors have a duty of care to try to save life first. If, despite their efforts, the patient dies, organ and tissue donation can then be considered and a completely different team of donation and transplant specialists doctors would be called in.

#### 7. Can you donate an organ while you are still alive?

Yes in some cases. The shortage of organs has led to an increasing number of organ donations from living people. The most common organ donated by a living person is a kidney, as a healthy person can lead a completely normal life with only one kidney. Kidneys from living donors have a better chance of long-term survival than those transplanted from people who have died. There are a number of reasons for this, the main one being that the donor is alive and healthy. Part of a liver can also be transplanted.

For all forms of living donation the risk to the donor must be considered very carefully. Before a living donor transplant can go ahead there are strict regulations to meet and a thorough process of assessment and discussion.

Donors are often a close relative but may also be individuals who are not related but have an established emotional relationship with the recipient such as a partner or close friend. Sometimes a donor and a recipient may be incompatible with each other because of blood group or tissue-type but it may be possible for them to be paired with another donor and recipient in the same situation, so that each recipient will benefit from a transplant that they would otherwise not have had. Donors may also offer to give a kidney to someone who is on the waiting list for a transplant but whom they have never met.

#### 8. Is living organ donation safe?

All donors are properly screened before any donation can take place. The donor undergoes a medical history review and a complete physical examination. If any health problem appears, donation is cancelled. Social and psychological status of the donors is also taken into consideration when deciding a donor's suitability.

International studies showed that kidney donors live longer than non-donors since they are thoroughly assessed from a clinical point of view before donation and then regularly afterwards.

Since the start of the program, the Hamad Medical Corporation registry has shown an excellent record of safety and high quality for both donors and recipients.

### 9. Why do I need to make a decision about whether to become a donor?

Organs and tissue from a potential donor will only be used if that is their wish. You can indicate your wishes in a number of ways such as telling a relative or close friend, by carrying an organ donor card or recording your wishes on the Organ Donor Registry. Putting your name on the Registry makes it easier for your wishes to be established and for your family to follow them.

If your wishes are not clear, your relatives will be asked what they think you would have wanted, so it is important that you make sure they are aware of your views on organ donation.

### 10. Will my name and address be given to other organizations?

No. This information will only be used by QODC to register your wishes on the Organ Donor Registry and by health care professionals in the event of your death. Your personal details will not be passed to any individual or organization without seeking your explicit consent.

### 11. I'm not sure if I've already registered what should I do?

Write to QODC or visit in person to ask; the confidential nature of the register means that we cannot tell you over the phone. If you apply to join and you are already registered our system will pick this up and update any relevant details.

### 12. Who would get my organs and tissue if I became a donor?

Many things need to be a close or perfect match to ensure a successful organ transplant. Blood group, age and weight are all taken into account. For kidneys another important factor is tissue type which is much more complex than blood grouping. The best results can be achieved if a perfect match is found.

There is a national, computerized list of patients waiting for an organ transplant. The computer will identify the best matched patient for an organ. Priority is given to patients with the most urgent need of a transplant.

Tissue is very occasionally matched for size and tissue type, but mostly it is available to any patient in need of a transplant.

### 13. Are donors screened to identify if they have a transmittable disease?

Yes. Blood is taken from all potential donors and tested to rule out transmittable diseases and viruses such as HIV and hepatitis. The family of the potential donor is made aware that this procedure is required.

### 14. Can I be a donor if I have an existing medical condition?

Yes, in most circumstances. Having a medical condition does not necessarily prevent a person from becoming an organ or tissue donor. The decision about whether some or all organs or tissue are suitable for transplant is made by a healthcare professional, taking into account your medical history.

### 15. Can I be a donor if I have been turned down to donate blood?

Yes. The decision about whether some or all organs or tissue are suitable for transplant is always made by a specialist, taking into account your medical history. There may be specific reasons why it has not been possible to donate blood, such as having had a blood transfusion or having had hepatitis in the past. Or there may be reasons why you could not give blood because of your health at the time; sometimes a simple thing like a cold or medication that you are taking can prevent you from donating blood.

### 16. Can older people be donors?

Yes. In the case of eyes and some other tissue, age does not matter. For other organs it is the person's physical condition, not age, which is the deciding factor. Specialist healthcare professionals decide in each case which organs and tissue are suitable. Organs and tissue from people in their 70s and 80s are transplanted successfully.

### 17. Are there religious objections to organ and tissue donation?

No. None of the major religions in Qatar object to organ and tissue donation and transplantation. If you have any doubts, you should discuss them with your spiritual or religious adviser.

**18. If someone desperately needs an organ, is there any point in making a special appeal?**

Yes and no. Any special appeal usually results in more people agreeing to become donors and can increase the number of organs available. However, family appeals through the newspapers and television will not result in an organ immediately becoming available for the person on whose behalf the appeal was made. The patient will still be on the transplant list, just like everyone else, and the rules that govern the matching and allocation of donor organs to recipients still apply.

**19. Can I agree to donate some organs or tissue and not others?**

Yes. You can specify which organs you would wish to donate. Simply tick the appropriate boxes on the Organ Donor Registry form.

**20. Can I agree to donate to some people and not to others?**

No. Organs and tissue cannot be accepted unless they are freely donated. No absolute conditions can be attached in terms of potential recipients. The only restriction allowed is which organs or tissue is to be donated.

**21. Does being a donor cause delays to funeral arrangements?**

No. The donation operation is performed as soon as possible after death.

**22. Could any of my organs or tissue be given to someone in another country?**

Yes, possibly. There is an agreement that any organs that cannot be matched to any patients in Qatar are offered to patients in KSA.

**23. Does donation leave the body disfigured?**

Organs and tissue are always removed with the greatest of care and respect for the person. This takes place in a normal operating theatre under sterile conditions by specialist doctors. Afterwards the surgical incision is carefully closed and covered by a dressing in the normal way. Only those organs and tissue specified by the donor or their family will be removed.

**“I’ve been given a new lease of life. I am able to do things I never dreamt I would be able to do again. I am so grateful for the chance that the donor and his family gave me.”**

Father of two, liver recipient

**24. Is it possible to see the body after donation?**

Yes. Families are given the opportunity to spend time with their loved one after the operation if they wish and this is facilitated by the transplant co-coordinator. Arrangements for viewing the body after donation are the same as after any death.

**25. Does a donor’s family have to pay the cost of donation?**

No. There is no question of any payment at all.

**26. My relative wants to be a donor. What do I need to do when they die?**

Inform the healthcare professionals who are involved either with your relative’s care or are helping you in the period immediately following their death. The earlier you are able to tell staff, the more likely it is that donation can take place.

**27. Could organs or tissue that is removed for transplant be used for research purposes?**

Only organs and tissue that cannot be used for transplant can be used for medical or scientific research purposes and only if specific permission has been obtained from your family.

**28. Would a donor’s family ever know who the recipient was?**

Confidentiality is always maintained, except in the case of living donors who usually already know each other. If the family wishes, they will be given some brief details such as the age and sex of the person or persons who have benefited from the donation. Patients who receive organs can obtain similar details about their donors.

**29. Why should I discuss my wishes with my relatives?**

It is important they know so they can confirm or help inform QCOD staff what your wishes were in the event of your death. If you register your wishes without telling the people closest to you, it may come as a surprise to them at a time when they are trying to deal with their loss. If you think you would find it difficult to raise the subject, you could try using this booklet or a TV or newspaper story about a transplant to start a discussion.



### 30. What will happen if my relatives object?

We know that in most cases families will agree to donation if they knew that was their loved one's wish. If the family, or those closest to the person who has died, object to the donation when the person who has died has given their explicit permission, either by telling relatives, close friends or clinical staff, or by carrying a donor card, healthcare professionals will discuss the matter sensitively with them. They will be encouraged to accept the dead person's wishes and it will be made clear that they do not have the legal right to veto or overrule those wishes. There may, nevertheless, be cases where it would be inappropriate for donation to go ahead.

### 31. Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can. Call 44398559/44391141 and let your family know that you have changed your mind.

### 32. Can people buy or sell organs?

No. Qatar legislation, law 21 (1997), and the Doha Donation Accord criminalize the purchase or sale of human organs or tissue.

## Where to Donate

To register as a donor or for more information please contact:

**Qatar Organ Donation Center**

Fahad Bin Jassim Kidney Center

Hamad Medical Corporation

**P. O. Box 3050**, Doha, Qatar

**Tel:** (+974) 44398559

(+974) 44398557

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