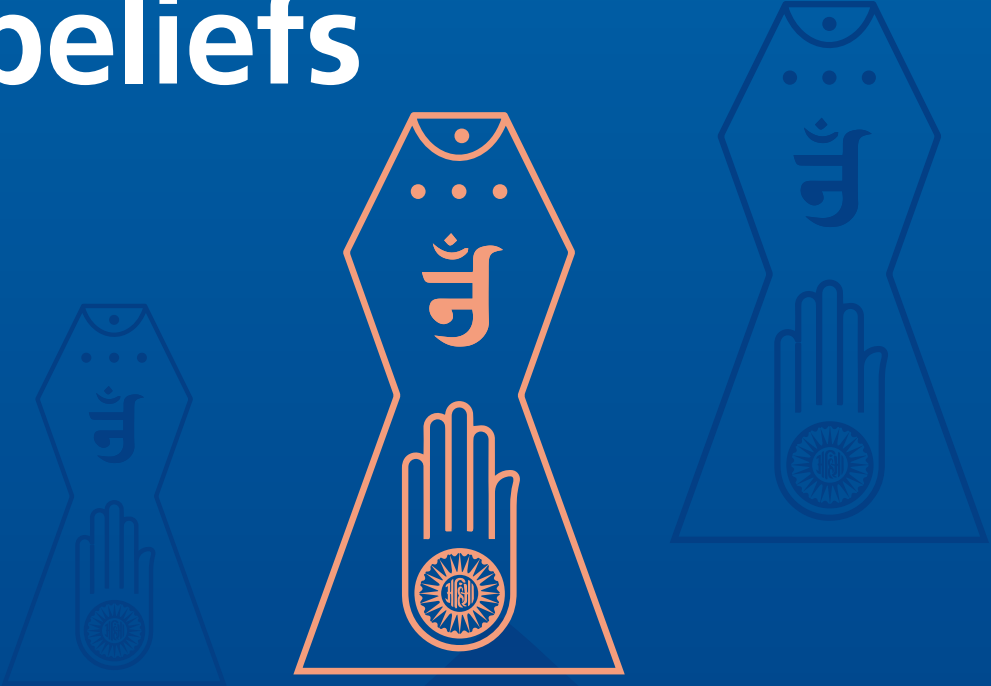


Organ donation and religious beliefs



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

Organ donation

Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone who needs a transplant. Thousands of people's lives across the UK are saved or improved each year by organ transplants. But every day across the UK someone dies waiting for an organ transplant.

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. Living donation of a single kidney or part of a liver is also possible.

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 kidney, 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. So please take the time to decide whether you want to be an organ donor, record that decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register, then tell your family.

Family involvement

Families play an important role in organ donation in all areas of the UK, regardless of whether an opt in or opt out system is in place.

If you die in circumstances where you could be an organ donor, a specialist organ donation nurse would check the NHS Organ Donor Register to see if you had registered your decision, and speak to your next of kin to discuss whether you wanted to be a donor. The voice of your family is critical to what happens. So, whatever your decision, it's important they know what you want. This will make it easier for them to honour your decision.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and other healthcare staff are committed to doing everything possible to save a patient's life. Organ donation is only considered once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been confirmed 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 for life. Doctors call this confirmation of death using neurological criteria, also known as 'brain stem death'. This is not the same as being in a coma or 'vegetative state'. Tests are carried out by two senior doctors, who are independent of the transplant team, on two different occasions, following strict national guidance.

When death is confirmed using neurological criteria, the patient will still be on a ventilator (a machine that pushes air into the lungs and supports the circulation of blood around the body). This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply, which is necessary for a healthier transplant outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people, who, with their family's agreement, are having life-sustaining intensive care treatment withdrawn. If the heart stops and circulation ceases soon after, death will be confirmed and donation can occur. This is known as 'donation after circulatory death'.

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.



Rohit Hiralal Shah was a gentle and kind man who lived his life being kind to everyone. Sadly, Rohit passed away aged only 55 after a heart attack. His wife Bharati and four children, decided to save lives by donating his kidneys, heart valves and corneas.

Rohit and the family have always valued the Jain principle of 'Karuna' (compassion), this was put to practice by the family while bidding him farewell.

Jainism and organ donation

The Jain scriptures were transmitted orally for over 1,000 years and were finally committed to writing in around 500CE. Other major commentary literature developed over the next 500 -1,000 years. During this time, organ donation was not possible, and hence not specifically mentioned in any way in the Jain scriptures.

We therefore have to look at the teachings in a broader sense. King Megharath (an incarnation of the Jain Tirthankara Shantinatha) gave part of his body during his lifetime to save the life of not a human, but a pigeon. There are two important teachings here; firstly, this story is preserved over this considerable time to show us that compassion and donation extends to giving part of your body to save/benefit another life, and secondly that this can also happen during your lifetime, which is a greater donation than after death.

This example of saving the life of a pigeon illustrates the importance of saving all living beings in Jainism. Many Jain religious leaders followed by the Jain community in the UK support organ donation after death as well as living organ donation.



Jain religious leaders support organ donation



Samani Dr Pratibha Pragya

Jain Vishva Bharati, London

"In the 21st century, society has made big advancements in medical treatment. By promoting organ donation, members of the Jain faith are displaying tremendous awareness of their own social responsibilities."



Param Pujya Bhaishree Nalinbhai Kothari

Spiritual Head: Shree Raj Saubhag Satsang Mandal

"The full importance of human life can only be realised with its compassion to all living beings. This also includes donating one's organs whilst living and certainly after death."



Param Pujya Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji

Veerayatan

"With the donation of organs, it is now possible to reduce the pain and suffering of people. Organ donation is a highly spiritual act-it helps others live even after we have left our own bodies. I encourage more and more people to take the active step of participating in this noble deed."

Making your choice

How do I become a donor?

If you want to donate some or all of your organs or tissue after your death, the best way to ensure your family know what you want and honour your decision is to register as a donor on the NHS Organ Donor Register and to tell your family what you have decided. You can also record on the register whether your faith/belief is important and should be considered as part of the donation discussion.

What if I don't want to donate?

If you don't want to donate, it is important to register this decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register and to tell your family.

Don't 'opt out' of donation if you are happy to donate some organs or tissue but not others. Instead, register as an organ donor and select the organs or tissue you would like to donate.

What if I want to nominate someone to make the donation decision?

There is a form available to download from organdonation.nhs.uk which enables you to nominate someone else to make the donation decision for you. You will need to complete the form and send it back. Please note that whether or not you can legally nominate a representative to make the decision for you depends on where you live in the UK.

To find out more and to register your decision, whatever it is, visit **organdonation.nhs.uk** or call **0300 123 23 23**.

Jain and Hindu Organ Donation Alliance (JHOD)

JHOD is a well-established alliance of patients, donors, community leaders and medical professionals doctors which is leading on organ, blood and stem cell donation in the UK.

To contact JHOD, please email info@jhod.org.uk and for further details please visit our website www.jhod.org.uk.



To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit organdonation.nhs.uk



Blood and Transplant

This leaflet has been produced by JHOD in partnership with NHSBT