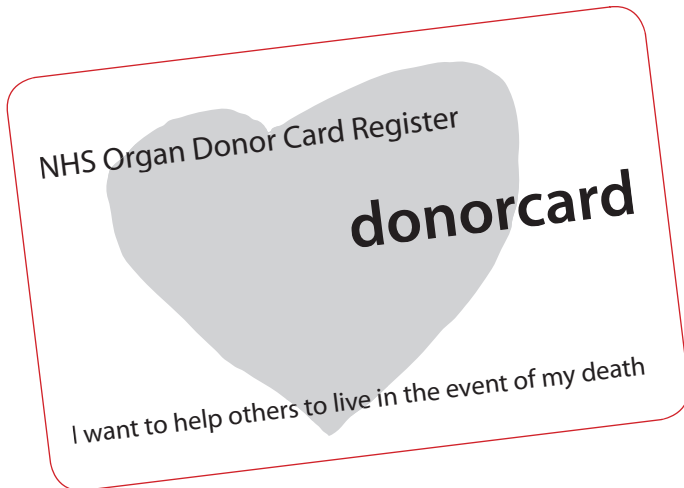


# Kidneys

What do you know about kidneys? With a partner, see how many of the following questions can you answer:

- Is a human kidney about the same size as a plum or bigger?
- For how long (approximately) can a healthy human kidney be stored before it is transplanted?
- When a kidney transplant is performed, where is the 'new' kidney put in the body?
- How long does the average kidney transplant operation take?
- What is the function of the kidney in the body?



I request that after my death

A. any part of my body be used for treatment of others  or  
B. my kidneys  corneas  heart  lungs  liver  pancreas   
be used for transplantation.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Full name \_\_\_\_\_

In the event of my death, if possible contact:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Remember to tell someone close to you that you want to be an organ donor. We'll need their agreement if the time ever comes.

Do you carry a kidney donor card like the one shown in the picture?

If you don't carry a donor card, what are the reasons for not doing so?

If you carry one, why did you decide to do so?

Are you worried that a mistake might be made if you are unconscious rather than dead after an accident, for example?

## Episode 1 – emergency

There is a young child in the renal unit of a district hospital (a unit for patients with kidney problems). She is connected to a dialysis machine because her kidneys are not functioning. She desperately needs a kidney transplant.

There is no one in her family who can help. Doctors think that they will get a kidney for her soon and she is first on the hospital waiting list. She will not survive much longer without a new kidney.

Suddenly, one of the country's leading medical scientists is rushed into the unit. He is on the verge of discovering a cure for arthritis, but has suffered acute kidney failure. Doctors quickly discover that he is in very bad shape. There are no other dialysis machines. He has only two days to live unless he gets a transplant.

Miraculously, a kidney is found. The doctors have to decide who to operate on.

*What is your advice to them? With a few other students, consider the choices and reasons. Decide on your advice to the doctors, then compare your decision with another group or with the class.*

## Episode 2 – an angry nurse

The doctors decide to operate on the scientist. One of the nurses who cares for the young child is angered by the decision. She believes that the waiting list is the only fair way of deciding transplants. She is wondering whether to inform the press.

If the press hear of the doctors' decision, the hospital will receive damaging publicity and kidney sufferers will get nervous. But should doctors be allowed to ignore the waiting list?

*What would you advise the nurse to do and why? Talk about this issue with your group, decide on the right advice to give, then see whether others agree with your ideas.*

## Episode 3 – black market

Although it is not common knowledge, the kidney used in the operation was bought illegally on the black market. The surgeon arranged all this but the scientist's family paid for the kidney.

The surgeon who performed the operation is now feeling a growing sense of guilt. Should she confess this information, lose her job and raise doubts about the donor's kidney, or should she just keep quiet? After all, a life has been saved and a cure for arthritis will now be quickly available.

*Share your thoughts on this moral dilemma with your group.*

## The final episode – what happens?

*Can you offer a credible conclusion to this tale? In your group, discuss some possibilities. For example:*

- The medical scientist recovers but the child dies.
- Another kidney is found quickly and the child recovers.
- The story is discovered by a reporter and publicised. There are questions asked in the national press about the whole donor programme, and the shortage of kidneys becomes an even more serious problem. The surgeon is put on trial.
- The medical scientist suddenly becomes ill again with a serious blood disorder. The scientist's family are convinced that the transplanted kidney is a diseased one and want to publicise the whole event in an effort to locate another kidney quickly. The surgeon tries to stop them.
- The medical scientist becomes ill again. His family pay for another kidney, but he dies before he can receive it.

*Talk about a likely outcome, then tell it to the class.*