

How the national organ transplant system works

A growing demand for organs, a limited supply and medical and geographic differences in how various organs are used influence how transplants occur in the U.S. The system is run by the United Network for Organ Sharing, a nonprofit, through a federal contact.

RECIPIENT

WAITING LIST



Once a person is diagnosed with a failing organ, he or she can be placed on the national transplant waiting list to receive a donor organ. Every 10 minutes, someone in the U.S. is added to the list.

WAITING

The wait for an acceptable organ can vary. The government says 21 people in the U.S. die every day waiting for a transplant.

Many factors are considered while on the waiting list including:

- ✓ Blood type
- ✓ Distance from donor
- ✓ Time on list
- ✓ Body size
- ✓ Severity of illness
- ✓ Tissue type

ORGAN

DONOR FOUND

A donor dies at a hospital. The person may have registered to be an organ donor or their family may give permission. Some kidney and liver recipients have living donors.

A donor can supply up to eight organs:

- ✓ Liver
- ✓ Pancreas
- ✓ Intestines
- ✓ Lungs (x2)
- ✓ Heart
- ✓ Kidneys (x2)



TRANSPORT

Quick transport can be critical to the success of the surgery.

Typical maximum organ preservation times:

Heart or lung: 4-6 hours
Liver: 8-12 hours
Pancreas: 12-18 hours
Kidney: 24-36 hours

SURGERY

If all goes well with the surgery, the patient can live with the transplanted organ for years.