

HEALTH MINISTER LAUNCHES ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK 2024 (20-27 April)
The key message to the public continues to be
DON'T LEAVE YOUR LOVED ONES IN DOUBT and SHARE YOUR WISHES

The signing of the Human Tissue Bill into law by the President, Michael D. Higgins, on February 28th this year, is a significant milestone in the over 60 years of organ donation and transplantation in Ireland. With the planned introduction of altruistic donation and an opt-out register, we have an opportunity to engage the national population in an important conversation about organ donation.

The official launch of Organ Donor Awareness Week 2024 (20-27 April) by the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly T.D., was held at the Mansion House, Dublin 2 on Tuesday, 16th April. The key campaign message continues to be built around sharing your wishes with your loved ones about organ donation with the theme,

Don't Leave Your Loved Ones in Doubt #LeaveNoDoubt

Organ Donor Awareness Week 2024 will take place on 20 - 27 April and is organised by the Irish Kidney Association (IKA) in association with the HSE's Organ Donation Transplant Ireland (ODTI).

The IKA are asking the public to use Organ Donor Awareness Week as a prompt to have a family discussion about organ donation. Even after the new legislation commences, consent for organ retrieval will continue to be sought from the families of all potential organ donors. By sharing your wishes when you are in good health you are helping your family to act on your behalf in the event of you being a potential organ donor.

By requesting an organ donor card (www.ika.ie/donorcard), you are letting the 600+ people, and their families, who are currently waiting for 'the call' that there are people out there who are thinking of them. With approximately only 1% of deaths occurring in the circumstances of potential organ donation, we cannot afford to miss any opportunities because a person's wishes are unknown.

Speaking at the national launch Ms. Carol Moore, Chief Executive, the Irish Kidney Association said, "We look forward to provisions within the Human Tissue Act being commenced. We know that the Department of Health and HSE are working hard on this and hopefully will announce a future date for the commencement of the Act shortly.

"When the Act is implemented, people who do not wish to donate their organs can opt-out, and in these cases, their families will not be approached in the event of their untimely death. All those who do not opt-out will be considered **potential** organ donors, but their families will still have the final decision. The Act will also allow, for the first time, for altruistic living donation in Ireland, where the donor does not know the recipient."

Dr. Catherine Motherway, Clinical Lead, Organ Donation & Transplant Ireland, HSE, also spoke at the national launch of the campaign and said, “Organ Donation is a gift of enormous magnitude that transforms the lives of our transplant recipients and their families. For many it literally is The Gift of Life. Organ donors are celebrated and cherished publicly every year during Organ Donation Awareness Week. We hear the stories of lives saved, the joy of new beginnings, being able to work, play sport, raise children, and often the relief and joy of breathing easily without machines. The gift is tinged with sadness knowing that another family has lost a life but I know the donors are cherished in the hearts of each transplant recipient daily. For our deceased donor families, we know that the decision to donate organs of their loved one can bring hope and some solace in the midst of grief and we too will listen to their stories and the pride and joy that they have in their loved one’s life and final act of immense kindness. Organ donors save lives. In this very tormented and unsettled world of ours, they are a ray of pure goodness showing us the very best of human nature, people giving and sharing with others.”

At any one time in Ireland, there are approximately 600 people active on waiting lists for organ transplants including heart, lung, liver, kidney, and pancreas. 282 organ transplant operations were carried out in Ireland in 2023 (32 more transplants than in 2022). This activity could not have taken place but for the generosity of the families of 95 deceased donors and 30 living kidney donors. In 2023, 54 liver transplants and 6 pancreas transplants took place at St. Vincent’s Hospital, while 7 heart transplants and 24 lung transplants were carried out at the Mater Hospital.

Last year, saw an increase in the number of kidney transplants taking place at Beaumont Hospital - 191 kidney transplants took place. While 161 of these kidney transplants were from deceased donors which was an increase of 31 from the previous year there were also 30 living kidney donor transplants last year, three less than in 2022. On 31st December 2023, there were 2,502 people in Ireland with end-stage kidney failure undergoing dialysis treatment, but only approximately one-fifth (approx. 500 people) of these are on the kidney transplant waiting list.

In order to engage the entire country with the topic of organ donation and transplantation, it is important to have partners who have a presence in every community. To this end, the Irish Kidney Association is delighted to again be partnering with An Post and the Irish Pharmacy Union who are supporting the campaign, and several Pharmacy chains who are also helping to spread the message about the importance of organ donation by displaying the campaign poster and carrying stocks of organ donor cards. The campaign poster will be displayed on 35 outdoor advertising poster sites in shopping centres, sponsored by Clear Channel. RTÉ’s Fair City will also have posters featured on the set in some of its episodes broadcast during Organ Donor Awareness Week and Dunnes Stores will be displaying organ donor cards at the customer service desks. Volunteers whose families have been touched by organ donation will be in various locations nationwide distributing organ donor cards during the Week.

Recognising the growing diversity in the Irish population, the **campaign poster is available in English, Irish, Polish, and Yoruba**, and digital copies can be downloaded from the Irish Kidney Association’s website www.ika.ie/donorweek

The public is being asked to mark Organ Donor Awareness Week by getting together to discuss organ donation with their loved ones and letting them know their wishes about organ donation. The organ donor card is the perfect icebreaker to start this conversation. Whether it is organising a get-together with family and friends, or setting up an information stand in your school, college, or place of work, it all makes a difference. A wide range of resources to support awareness are available on the IKA website [here. https://ika.ie/donorweek/resources/](https://ika.ie/donorweek/resources/)

You can request Organ Donor Cards via the IKA’s website www.ika.ie/donorweek
The Irish Kidney Association also provides their ‘Digital Organ Donor Card’ free to download from the App Store and the Google Play store.

Social media hashtags for Organ Donor Awareness Week are #LeaveNoDoubt, #ShareYourWishes , and #DonorWeek24. People can also tag the Irish Kidney Association when doing their own social media posts (@IrishKidneyAs on Twitter, @IrishKidneyA on Instagram, @IrishKidneyAssociation on Facebook).

	2022	2023*	5-year Average 2015-19
Deceased Donors	86	95	85
Kidney	130	161	128
Liver	51	54	61
Lungs	18	24	33
Heart	10	7	16
Pancreas	8	6	2
Total Deceased Donor Transplants	217	252	240
Living Donors	33	30	43
TOTAL TRANSPLANTS	250	282	283

[*excludes 2 UK paired exchange/desensitised transplants](#)

CALL TO ACTION: Individuals who wish to support organ donation by sharing their wishes with their loved ones are encouraged to keep the reminders of their decision available by carrying the organ donor card, permitting Code 115 to be included on their driver's license, or having the 'digital organ donor card' App on their smartphone. Organ Donor Cards can be requested by visiting the Irish Kidney Association (IKA) website www.ika.ie/get-a-donor-card or phoning the IKA on Tel. 01 6205306

-ENDS-