

Understanding HOTA

What is the Human Organ Transplant Act (HOTA)?

HOTA allows for the kidneys, liver, heart and corneas to be recovered in the event of death from any cause for the purpose of transplantation.

Prior to the implementation of HOTA in 1987, the kidney-donation rate was at a low 3 per year, and only involved cases of accidental deaths. But with the introduction of HOTA, the average number of transplants per year increased to 13.

In 2004, HOTA was amended to include the harvesting of the corneas, heart and liver in both accidental and non-accidental deaths. Besides this form of organ donation, regulations were made for living donor organ transplantations (i.e. the removal of organs from a living donor for transplantation into a patient). This raised the average number of patients benefiting from organ donation to 46 per year.

To further increase organs available for transplantation, from 1 November 2009, all Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents 21 years old and above, who are of sound mind, are included under HOTA unless they have opted out.

Those who are under HOTA will not only have the chance to help others, but will also have higher priority on the waiting lists should they need an organ transplant. This will be critical if the need arises.

For more details on HOTA, please log on to www.liveon.sg

Can I donate more than what is covered under HOTA?

Yes, any gift of life is welcomed. Medical (Therapy, Education and Research) Act (MTERA) is an opt-in scheme, where people can pledge to donate their organs or any body part for the purpose of transplantation, education or research upon their death.

Anyone 18 years old and above can pledge to donate his organs and/or tissues. Under MTERA, you can choose to donate all your organs and tissues or specify those you wish to donate.

In cases where a person had not pledged his organs under MTERA before passing away, the family members would be able to donate his organs under MTERA upon his death if they wish to do so.

For more details on MTERA, log on to www.liveon.sg



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

For more information on HOTA or organ donation,
Call the Ministry of Health, Singapore Hotline at 1800-2254122 or
the National Organ Transplant Unit at 63214390 or
visit the Live On website at www.liveon.sg

When you support
organ donation,
you help others live on.



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Organ Recipient - Keng Siang

When Keng Siang learnt he had liver cancer, he lost all hope of leading a happy and fulfilling life. His condition did not improve even after undergoing chemotherapy and two operations. It got to a point where he was given only a few months to live, unless a suitable transplant came along.

This race against time and worrying about what would happen to his young family if he died made every day spent waiting for an organ seem like a lifetime. Keng Siang desperately wanted a chance to be able to provide for his family, see his two young children grow up, and grow old with his wife.

Thankfully a liver transplant saved him. Today, Keng Siang is grateful for a second chance to live his life to the fullest, and to continue his life journey with his loved ones.

Every year there are more than 500 patients waiting to receive a life-saving transplant in Singapore. For these patients, the wait is not only agonising, but also emotionally draining. Most patients have to wait 5 to 17 years before a suitable organ is found.

However, some will die waiting, simply because there aren't enough available organs.

This booklet explains organ donation in Singapore, including the relevant legislation. We appreciate your continued support of the national effort to save lives through organ transplantation.

HOTA and MTERA at a Glance

	HOTA	MTERA
Who is included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Singapore Citizens & Permanent Residents of sound mind unless they have opted out. Must be 21 years old and above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone regardless of nationality and who is 18 years old and above can pledge to donate his organs and/or tissues.
Which organs are included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liver Kidneys Heart Corneas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All organs and tissues such as kidneys, liver, heart, corneas, lung, bone, skin, etc.
What is the purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide patients with organ failure with a suitable donor organ, for the purpose of transplantation only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide patients with organ failure with a suitable donor organ; To further medical education; and To support research and advancement of medical science.
How is consent given?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Singapore Citizens & Permanent Residents who meet the age requirement and are of sound mind will be automatically included under HOTA unless they have opted out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are not covered under HOTA, as well as those who wish to donate any organ and/or tissue not covered by HOTA, will only have their organs recovered if they have pledged their organs and/or tissues for donation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Changes Made to HOTA

From 1 November 2009, HOTA will cover all Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents 21 years old and above, who are of sound mind, unless they have opted out. The upper age limit of 60 years old has been removed.

1. If I opted out of HOTA before I was 60 years old and I am now above 60 years old, do I need to opt out again?

No. Those who have registered their objection to organ donation will continue to be excluded from HOTA and will not have to opt out again. However, an objection to HOTA can be withdrawn at anytime.

2. Are older organs suitable for donation?

With increasing life expectancy, healthier ageing and improvement in health technology, it is now becoming clearer that the condition of an internal organ is not always linked to age. Hence most countries in the world no longer have an upper age limit for organ donation.

3. How will the suitability and allocation of organs from older donors be determined?

There are internationally established protocols for evaluating organs from older donors to ensure the suitability of the organs for transplantation. To ensure optimum transplant outcomes, the allocation of organs will depend on the medical evaluation of organs and clinical parameters, such as blood group and tissue matching with potential recipients.

4. Will older organ failure patients waiting for an organ also benefit from these changes?

The upper age limit of 60 years old for patients to be placed on the kidney transplant waiting list will be removed. This would mean that elderly patients suffering from organ failure will now have an opportunity to benefit from an organ transplant if they are medically suitable.

Opting Out of HOTA

5. If I want to opt out of HOTA, what should I do?

HOTA regulates the removal of four organs – the kidneys, liver, heart and corneas. Anyone who decides against having his organs recovered upon death can do so by completing the pink "Objection to Organ Removal under Section 9(1)" form and send it to the National Organ Transplant Unit.

6. Does HOTA allow me to opt out from donating a specific organ?

Yes. Anyone who does not wish to donate a particular organ can register his objection using the same form above and send it to the National Organ Transplant Unit. The registrant can opt out of any or all of the four organs under HOTA.

7. What are the implications of opting out of HOTA?

Anyone who opts out of HOTA receives lower priority for receiving an organ on the national waiting list should he require an organ transplant in the future. This will apply specifically to the organs which he opted out of.

8. Can I withdraw my objection to HOTA?

Yes, an objection can be withdrawn at anytime. The withdrawal forms are available from the National Organ Transplant Unit. Alternatively, the form can be downloaded from <http://www.hota.gov.sg/forms>

Potential Organ Donors

9. Can I decide to whom I want my organs to be donated?

Organs that are recovered under HOTA are intended for donation to the common pool of patients on the respective organ transplant waiting lists. It is therefore neither possible to specify the recipients of organs recovered under HOTA, nor specifically exclude certain people from receiving organs. It is also not possible to release donor information to organ recipients.

10. Will my body be disfigured after organ donation?

The donor's body will always be cared for with the utmost respect by the transplant team. The same surgical standards applied to any living person undergoing surgery are also applied to organ donors. Any incisions made during the removal of organs are carefully repaired after the procedure. In the case of cornea donation, only the lens is removed and an artificial lens will be inserted. The eye remains otherwise intact.

11. Will the medical care of potential organ donors be compromised to expedite the recovery of organs?

Medicine is an ethical profession. No doctor would risk one life to save another. We would like to reassure you that every patient is given full medical care and every chance at survival irrespective of suitability and acceptance of organ donation. Organ donation is only considered after death has been declared by two well-qualified independent doctors who are not involved in the care of the patient.

12. Would relatives of donors be made to pay for the costs of organ recovery?

The hospital bills for any organ removal-related procedures and tests are not charged to the donor's family.

13. How is death certified?

There are well-defined and internationally accepted clinical criteria and tests for certification of death, including brain death. The clinical criteria for death must be met in the patient, as observed by two doctors, before death can be certified. Should the two doctors have differing opinions, death would not be certified. The two doctors who examine the patient must:

- not have been involved in the care or treatment of the patient being certified;
- not belong to the team of medical practitioners who will remove the organ from the body;
- not have been involved in the selection of the proposed recipient of the organ; and
- not be involved in the care or treatment of the proposed recipient of the organ during his hospitalisation for the transplant.

14. Is there a difference between being brain dead and being in a coma?

Being comatose is being in a state where a person is unarousable but tests confirm that some brain functions are still present. A comatose person may still recover or regain consciousness. Organs are never taken from a person in a coma. Brain death is when a person is unarousable and tests confirm that all brain functions have stopped irreversibly. Persons declared brain dead cannot recover or regain consciousness again.

Pledging Organs under the Medical (Therapy, Education and Research) Act (MTERA)

15. If I want to pledge my other organs, what do I need to do?

Anyone above 18 years old can sign up as an organ pledger to donate any organ and/or tissue for the purposes of transplant, education, or research under MTERA. You can do so by completing the yellow "Organ Donation Pledge Form" and send it to the National Organ Transplant Unit. You are encouraged to discuss your decision to pledge your organs and/or tissues with family members so that they will be aware of your wishes.

16. I am a foreigner. Can I donate my organs?

Yes, foreigners can choose to pledge their organs under MTERA. This pledge is effective only in Singapore, i.e. only if the foreigner passes away in Singapore, then his organs will be considered for donation. However, if a pledge has not been made, the next-of-kin can be approached for consent to organ donation.