



Organ Transplantation

The surgical removal of a healthy organ from one person and its transplantation into another person whose organ has failed or was injured -- is often lifesaving and gives the recipient a wonderful new lease on life.

But organ transplantation is also a major surgery that carries potential risks and drawbacks, such as the chance of organ rejection. That's precisely why you and your loved ones need to gather as much information as possible on organ transplants, as soon as possible.

In the United States, six types of organ transplants are now performed, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), a nonprofit organization in Richmond Va. UNOS administers the country's only Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, which includes the organ transplant waiting list.

Organ transplants include kidney, pancreas, liver, heart, lung, and intestine. Sometimes, "double" transplants are done, such as kidney/pancreas or heart/lung.

In 2009, 28,465 people received organs in the U.S., according to UNOS, a slight increase over the total for 2008 (27,966). Most recipients are between the ages of 50 and 64. To date, most donor organs have come from deceased donors.

Kidney transplants are the most common type of transplant surgery; the least common single-organ transplants are the intestines.

Depending on the organ needed, organs are matched using several characteristics, including blood type and size of the organ needed. Also taken into account is how long someone has been on the waiting list, how sick they are, and the distance between the donor and the potential recipient.