**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION**

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The organ transplant is a surgical operation where a failing or damaged organ in the human body is removed and replaced with a new one. An organ is a mass of specialized cells and tissues that work together to perform a function in the body. The heart is an example of an organ. It is made up of tissues and cells that all work together to perform the function of pumping blood through the human body. Any part of the body that performs a specialized function is an organ. Therefore eyes are organs because their specialized function is to see, skin is an organ because its function is to protect and regulate the body, and the liver is an organ that functions to remove waste from the blood.

A graft is similar to a transplant. It is the process of removing tissue from one part of a person’s body (or another person’s body) and surgically reimplanting it to replace or compensate for damaged tissue. Grafting is different from transplantation because it does not remove and replace an entire organ, but rather only a portion. Not all organs are transplanted. The term “organ transplant” typically refers to transplants of the solid organs: heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and intestines. Animal and artificial organs may also serve as transplantable organs. Other types of transplants that are less invasive or may require specialized procedures, nclude:

* skin transplants or grafts;
* corneal transplants (corneas are the outer layer of the eye);
* bone marrow transplants.

When a person falls ill because one of his or her organs is failing, or because the organ has been damaged in an accident or by disease, the doctor first assesses whether the person is medically eligible for a transplant. If so, the doctor then refers the individual to a local transplant center. The transplant center evaluates the patient’s health and mental status as well as the level of social support to see if the person is a viable candidate for an organ transplant. If the patient is a transplant candidate a donor organ must be found. There are two sources for donor organs. The first source for organs removes them from recently deceased people. These organs are called cadaveric organs. The second source for donor organs is a living person. Living donors are often related to the patient, but that is not always the case. Spouses and close friends frequently donate organs to ailing loved ones.