

Live organ donation: frequently asked questions

What's happening with live organ donation?

A new Act was passed on 5 December 2016, which means live organ donors will be compensated for loss of earnings after donating an organ. This is for up to 12 weeks of recovery after the surgery.

The Ministry of Health administered this compensation, called Live Organ Donor Compensation, on the 5 December 2017.

Why has this change been made?

Live organ donation (for example, kidney, or part of a liver) can significantly improve the quality and duration of life for many people.

Removing barriers to live organ donation is important to help people get the transplant they need.

Why is there compensation for live organ donors and not deceased organ donors?

Live organ donation compensation is for loss of earnings a person may experience while they undergo surgery for the donation and the subsequent recovery process. Deceased organs are gifted by the donor.

Who can receive compensation under the Act?

Anyone who donates an organ (either a kidney or part of their liver) can receive compensation under the Act if they have lost earnings and qualify. The compensation does not apply for people who use their sick leave or annual leave to donate.

Live organ donors will be able to apply to the Ministry of Health

The donor does not have to be living in New Zealand. However, the donor's surgery must take place in New Zealand and the person receiving the organ must be eligible for access to New Zealand health services.

When do I get the Live Organ Donor Compensation and how long do I get it for?

Live organ donors who qualify to donate will be paid 100 percent of their loss of income from the day of their surgery and for up to 12 weeks to recover. You will need to provide evidence of earnings and a medical certificate for the recovery period.

What if I'm self-employed?

If you are self-employed, you will be eligible for loss of earnings compensation. You will need to provide evidence of earnings to determine this rate, which may include information from your accountant.

Will this be taxed, or do I need to make a tax payment on these earnings?

All compensation will be subject to tax. The Ministry of Health will make all relevant tax deductions before payment of compensation.

Will I still be eligible for Live Organ Donor Compensation if I am taking sick leave or annual leave over the surgery and recovery time?

People can choose to take sick leave or annual leave over the surgery and recovery time. If you choose to do this, you will not receive compensation as you have not lost income as a result of making the donation.

Can I get this payment if I am already on a benefit?

You will not be eligible for the Live Organ Donor Assistance if you are already getting a main benefit from the Ministry of Social Development. Talk to your case manager at Work and Income who can tell you what your options are. However, you will be eligible under the Act.

Are my travel and accommodation costs covered?

You may be entitled to have some of your travel and accommodation costs associated with the organ donor surgery

reimbursed. Funding for this is the responsibility of the hospital where the person receiving your organ lives.

You will need to make an application under the National Travel Assistance policy. You can find the information here:
<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/national-travel-assistance-scheme-feb19.pdf>

The NTA policy and the Live Organ Donation Travel and Accommodation Cost Reimbursement Protocol describe what you will be entitled to.

Can I get child support and/or home help when I come home from surgery?

No, this is not available through this Act. For more information call the Work and Income Contact Centre on 0800 559 009 or go to

Who will make the payment?

The Ministry of Health will manage the payments, working closely with hospitals and regional transplant coordinators.

Information for overseas donors of live organs

Can I donate a kidney or part of my liver to a person living in New Zealand, if I am living overseas?

Yes, once you have successfully completed a medical check to make sure this type of surgery is suitable for you. You will need to come to New Zealand to have the donation surgery and the person you are donating the organ to must be eligible for transplant surgery within the New Zealand health system.

If you want to donate you will need to go through medical tests and checks to make sure this type of surgery is suitable for you.

For more information about eligibility for New Zealand health services: <http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services/eligibility-questions-and-answers-consumers>

How much will I be entitled to?

If you are eligible for organ donation you will be compensated for loss of earnings for up to 12 weeks from surgery. A doctor will decide when you are fit to return to work after the surgery and this will determine how long you will receive the compensation for. You

Can I get extra support for travel and accommodation assistance?

If you are an overseas donor you are entitled to travel and accommodation assistance within New Zealand. Your renal transplant coordinator, donor liaison coordinator or renal social worker at the hospital where the surgery will be carried out will provide information on this.

For more information call the Work and Income Contact Centre on 0800 559 009 or go to www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-zbenefits/live-organ-donor-assistance.html

Which organs can I donate?

Most live organ donors donate a kidney. In some cases, a person may donate part of their liver.

Where in New Zealand do live organ transplants take place?

In New Zealand kidney transplants are carried out in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch hospitals. Liver transplants are only carried out in Auckland.

While the donor surgery will happen in one of these hospitals, the assessment of whether you are a suitable donor can happen at a hospital closer to where you live.

Who are the hospital staff that would be involved in my care if I donate an organ?

A transplant coordinator and/or donor liaison coordinator will look after you before and after surgery. The coordinators are usually nurses who have experience in donation. In some cases, you will also see a hospital renal social worker or a psychologist.

If you are donating a kidney, you will see a kidney specialist (known as a nephrologist). If you are donating a liver, you will see a specialist from the Liver Transplant Unit in Auckland.

The specialist will assess your medical tests and talk to you about donating your organ, including any health risks.

A surgeon will carry out your surgery.

In Christchurch or Wellington your kidney surgery will be carried out by a urology specialist.

In Auckland your surgery (kidney or liver) will be carried out by a transplant surgical specialist.

How do I become a live organ donor?

If you are thinking about donating your kidney, you can contact the donor liaison coordinator or renal social worker at your nearest hospital to talk about what you need to know about donating a live organ.

Is it safe?

People can donate an organ if they have successfully completed medical tests and checks to make sure this type of surgery is suitable for them.

There is a risk with any surgery. That's why live organ donors have health assessments before surgery and are carefully monitored after surgery.

If I donate, and need a kidney later, will I be prioritised on the waiting list for a transplant?

You would be placed on the waiting list for a new organ. Kidney transplants are prioritised according to the National Kidney Allocation Scheme when they are required. Your specialist will discuss this risk with you before you donate.

How long would I be in hospital for?

Most people who donate a kidney or part of a liver can return home within a couple of weeks after surgery.

What happens if after the 12-week recuperation period I get complications as a direct result of the organ donation?

Your renal specialist will help you to manage this. You may be eligible for ACC assistance, depending on the cause of the complication.

Where can I get more information?

The following websites provide information about organ donation in New Zealand, including contact details:

Ministry of Health: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/treatments-and-surgery/organ-donations-and-transplants/live-organ-donation/compensation-loss-earnings>

National Renal Transplant Service

- <http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/national-renal-transplant-service>

Organ Donation New Zealand - www.donor.co.nz

Kidney Health New Zealand - www.kidneys.co.nz

Live Kidney Donation Aotearoa - www.kidneydonor.org.nz