

Long waiting list to receive organs in South Africa

South Africa currently has about 2,780 people who are on the waiting list for organ donations and transplants, which include kidney, liver, heart and lungs.



Source: FreePik

According to the Department of Health, the waiting lists are getting longer while more people, including young children, are dying almost every day waiting for organs.

The department has appealed to citizens to embrace the gift of life through organ donation, as the global community gears up to mark a campaign to raise awareness about the significance of organ transplants and donations.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the department said the 2022 organ donation campaign aims to help people realise that volunteering to donate their organs while alive or after death can be life-changing for many other people.

The 2022 organ donation campaign is commemorated under the theme, "A life after mine", which serves as a call to South Africans to become lifesavers through organ donation.



“Organ donation is a gift of life, and a single organ donor can save up to seven lives and at the same time, improve the quality of life of many people by removing the emotional and psychological burden.”

While the wider public is aware of blood donation, the department believes there is little knowledge when it comes to organ donation.

The department has joined hands with stakeholders such as the Organ Donation Foundation and civil society organisations in the sector to raise and sustain awareness about the important campaign.

Many people have benefitted from organ donations across cultural and religious differences, and their lives have been changed.

Anyone can volunteer to donate their organs once they reach 18 years of age.

Two forms of donation

The two common forms of organ donation include live donations, where donors who are alive can give organs like a kidney and a part of the liver because human beings can survive with one kidney, while the liver is the only organ in the body that can regenerate itself.

Another form of organ donation is known as a deceased donation, which involves an organ transplant to a living person from a consented donor who has passed on.

“Kidneys and livers are the two organs that are needed most frequently due to various reasons but one common liver failure cause in kids is biliary atresia, which is often misdiagnosed as jaundice,” the department said.

It urged people to have discussions with their families and loved ones once they decide to sign up for organ donation.

“We call on all South Africans, especially healthcare workers, to be part of the organ-donor network to reduce the backlog to save lives.”

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