

THE GIFT OF LIFE

Although numbers are increasing, the United Kingdom has a far lower percentage of organ donors than some of our European neighbours. Market research carried out last year indicates that just over half our population would definitely be willing to donate organs and almost a further third would consider doing so. The main reasons for not registering as donors were distrust of the medical profession, discomfort in thinking about death and a lack of knowledge about the organ donation process. We'll try, in this and future newsletters, to explain the process in straightforward language.

In England, we currently have what is usually called the 'opt-in' system. You can register as a donor by visiting <http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>, or by telephoning 0300 123 2323. You should register even if you already carry one of the old red donor cards. If you have previously registered, you can opt out again if you change your mind, but there is no separate 'opt-out' register. If you are firmly opposed to the idea of being an organ donor, you need to make sure that your next-of-kin and family are aware of your views.

When someone dies in circumstances that make organ donation possible, the next-of-kin and immediate family will be asked whether they are agreeable to this. If the person who has died has *not* registered as a donor, the family decision is final. If that person *has* registered, the family has no right in law to override the expressed consent to donate but, in practice, if the matter is clearly causing deep distress to those involved organ removal will not take place.

Most organ transplants involve people who have died while undergoing emergency treatment or have been on a life-support machine. Organ removal cannot take place until the donor has been certified to be brain-stem dead by two experienced doctors, who are completely independent of the transplant team. In a limited number of cases, organs can be donated by patients who die in hospital other than in the circumstances described above, but equally stringent procedures are applied. The standards to be met are very strict and are accepted medically, legally and ethically in the UK and most other countries in the world.

The numbers tell the story and show how important it is to increase the number of donors. In the year to 31 March 2014, 3505 transplants were carried out using organs from 1320 donors who had died. Great news – but there are over 10,000 people needing a transplant and, on average, three people on the waiting list die *every day* because suitable organs are not available.

You are more likely to need a transplant during your lifetime than you are to die in circumstances in which your organs would be available for donation. Think hard about that, and consider registering today.

HOLIDAY CLOSING

The Surgery will be closed on the following dates:

Christmas Day (Thursday 25 December 2014)

Boxing Day (Friday 26 December 2014)

New Year's Day (Thursday 1 January 2015)

We will be open as usual until 6.00.p.m., on Christmas Eve (24 December) and New Year's Eve (31 December); please see 'Surgery Update' overleaf for further details.

WINTER JAB REMINDER

Free influenza injections are still available for eligible patients who were unable to attend one of our clinics. Protection is important for everyone over 65 and for all other patients with heart disease, diabetes, chest problems such as bronchitis or asthma, or long-term kidney disease. To make an appointment, just contact reception in the usual way. Remember, you need a flu injection *every* year to give you maximum protection.

BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

FROM EVERYONE AT

HEATON ROAD SURGERY



MISSED APPOINTMENTS

We've recently noticed an increase in the number of patients who have not kept the appointments booked for them.

If you no longer need your appointment, or something prevents you from attending, please contact the surgery – giving as much notice as possible – so that the appointment can be offered to someone else.

Simply not turning up for an appointment means that the doctors or other health professionals will waste valuable time, and other patients who may urgently need appointments will suffer unnecessary delays. Please help us to give the best service we can to **all** of our patients!

SURGERY UPDATE

Christmas and New Year closure details are shown overleaf. The next Bank Holiday closures will be Good Friday (3 April) and Easter Monday (6 April).

Remember that the Surgery closes for staff training every Thursday lunchtime, from 12.00 to 1.30pm. We will also be closed for training purposes all afternoon (closing at 12.00. noon) on:

Tuesday 20 January 2015
Wednesday 25 March 2015

– but on 20 January we will re-open at 6.00pm. for the regular Tuesday late surgery.

If you need urgent medical assistance at any time when we are closed, cover is available. Simply telephone 111; this is not just an out of hours service – you can get help and advice and, if a home visit is needed, you will be seen by a Doctor from Northern Doctors Urgent Care.

If you have a major medical emergency needing an ambulance, you should telephone 999 immediately.

NEW FACE ON THE BLOCK

Tracy Miles joined the Heaton Road team on 1 September as our Healthcare Assistant. Tracy used to work in the Maternity Ward at the RVI but, after having spent some time out of the NHS, she decided that she would like to work in a GP Surgery. Tracy is currently taking blood samples and checking blood pressure, but after a period of training she'll be involved with advice on giving up smoking, ECG checks, ear springing, dressing and a whole range of health support services within the Practice.

We are delighted to welcome Tracy to our team, and hope that her time at Heaton Road will be lengthy, fruitful and satisfying.

PRACTICE TEST RESULTS

Please allow a full week (5 working days) for the results of any tests taken at the Practice to reach us. We'll contact you if any problems arise or if the results need to be discussed with you.

PATIENTS' GROUP

The next quarterly meeting of our Patients' Group will be held on Tuesday 13 January, starting at 6.00pm. As the Surgery is open late on Tuesdays the meeting will be held upstairs – please ask for directions at Reception.

If you have any thoughts (good or bad!) about the way the practice operates, just ask at Reception for a suggestion form. The group will discuss your comments and, if necessary, recommend changes. You can send back the form anonymously or, if you include your name and address, we'll let you have feedback after the meeting. Either way, the Group members will not know who made the suggestion.

Any patient registered with the Practice is entitled to attend and take part in the discussions – just come along and take a seat!

GOT A MINUTE TO SPARE?

Don't waste it – visit www.nhs.uk; the site is chock full of information about services provided by the NHS and detail of the choices YOU can make about where and how you are treated. There's also a huge range of useful articles about almost every medical problem.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

For a period beginning on 1 December, we'll be issuing very brief questionnaires asking you whether, in the light of your recent experience at Heaton Road, you would be likely to recommend our service to friends and family.

If this seems a bit like corporate market research, it's because – in effect – that's exactly what it is. However, it's an NHS-wide programme in which all Practices will be taking part, so we hope that at this season of goodwill you'll give us your support!

HEATON ROAD HEALTH TIP No.6

Please remember to drink sensibly over the festive season. You could try alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, having alcohol-free days, and avoiding alcohol early in the day.

Above all, never drink and drive – if you do, it isn't just your own health you are putting at risk!