



# Receiving Donor Human Tendon, Meniscus or Bone

## Introduction

Like all medical treatments, the decision to offer donor tissue to a patient is made only after careful consideration. In making that decision your (or your child's) doctor will balance the risk of you having a transplant against the risk of you not having one.

## Why might I need donor tissue at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital?

Donor tissues can be used to treat many conditions. You may need a transplant to replace diseased or damaged bone and tendons.

## Things to discuss with your doctor

Is using donor tissue my only option? Some operations can't be carried out without using a using donor tissue from another person. In other cases, it is sometimes possible to use tissue from your own body, or a synthetic graft. Ask your doctor to explain why using donor tissue is needed, or if there are any other treatments available.

## Are donor tissues safe?

Most surgical procedures are routine, but no procedure is completely risk free. There is a small risk that human tissue donated from another person may carry infections. Precautions are taken to ensure that tissues are as safe as possible:

- All tissues are donated by unpaid donors for altruistic reasons. Every tissue donor's health and medical history is carefully checked. Very specific questions are asked to help rule out anyone who may pass on infection.
- Blood samples from tissue donors are tested for infections which we know can be passed on in blood and tissues, such as hepatitis B

and C viruses, and HIV. Any donated tissue that fails these tests is discarded.

It is not possible to state the precise risk of disease transmission for individual tissue grafts, however compared to other everyday risks, the likelihood of getting an infection from donor tissue is very low. For example, it has been estimated that the risk of transmitting hepatitis B or C through a bone graft donated by a living donor are less than 1 in 2.3 million. This means that in the UK, we would expect an infection to be passed on by one of these grafts once in every 500 years. There are no documented cases in the UK of any infectious disease being transmitted from one donor to a patient, by a tissue graft supplied through an NHS tissue bank. There is at present no blood test available for variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD) and we do not have any treatment for it. Although the risk of transmitting vCJD through using donor tissue is believed to be very low, it cannot be ruled out.

## What should I do if I am worried about receiving donor tissue?

If you have any concerns you should discuss these with your doctor. If you don't understand what you are told or if you want to know more, don't hesitate to ask for more information.

## Making the decision

When you are satisfied that your doctor has fully explained the operation, the alternatives and the risks, you need to decide whether or not you wish to have the donor tissue. Only you can make this decision. If you would like to know more about tissue donation, the people who donate tissues and the patients who receive them, please visit:

[www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissue donation](http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissue%20donation)