

Is there a need for organ, eye, and tissue donors?

Yes! In the United States there are over 100,000 individuals waiting for transplants and many thousands more in need of tissue and corneal transplants. Sadly, an average of 17 people die each day because an organ was not made available for transplant. To enroll as a donor on the New York State Donate Life Registry [CLICK HERE](#).

Who can be a donor?

Age limitations may apply with some specific organs and tissues, but in general, anyone who wishes to donate should enroll as a donor on the New York State Donate Life Registry and have a family discussion. Donor suitability is determined at the time of death.

How do I become an organ & tissue donor?

The most important step in becoming a donor is to discuss your wishes with your immediate family members. After discussing your wishes with your family, enroll as a donor on the New York State Donate Life Registry by clicking [HERE](#).

How do organ/tissue recovery programs learn of potential donors?

According to law, all hospitals in the US are required to notify their designated organ procurement organization of all deaths and imminent deaths. ConnectLife has a communication center that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to handle referrals from hospitals.

Will medical personnel work as hard to save me if they know I am a donor?

The quality of medical and nursing care will not change, regardless of your decision to be a donor. Doctors, nurses, and other personnel who treat patients at the time of death are in no way involved with transplant programs or possible recipients. Donation is considered only after every effort has been made to save the patient's life.

What is meant by brain death?

Brain death occurs in patients who have suffered a traumatic injury to the brain. As a result of the injury the brain swells and obstructs its own blood supply. Without blood flow, all brain tissue dies. Artificial support systems may maintain functions such as heartbeat and respiration for a few days, but not permanently. Brain death is an established medical and legal diagnosis of death. A physician can confirm brain death beyond a doubt, using a strict neurological examination.

Will organ and tissue donation interfere with funeral arrangements or change the appearance of the donor's body?

Donation will not disfigure the body or change the way it looks in a casket. On rare occasions, there may be some swelling or discoloration at the recovery site. The funeral director can usually minimize this during preparation so that it is not noticeable during viewing. Most donations are performed in operating room conditions (cornea donations may be performed at bedside), and the body is treated with the same care as a surgery patient.

After donation surgery, the body is carefully reconstructed to normal appearance and donation coordinators -- the professionals who handle arrangements for the donation -- provide funeral directors with detailed information so the body can be prepared for burial. There are no obvious stitches and donation won't usually interfere with funeral plans including open casket services.

Will donation delay the funeral?

In general, organ and tissue donation must take place within 12 to 24 hours after a declaration of death. Most donations are completed sooner. Immediately after the donation surgery, the body is released to the funeral service. The donation may add a few hours to the process but should not delay funeral plans.

Is donation against my religious beliefs?

Most major religions support donation as an act of human kindness in keeping with religious teachings. People are often unaware of the attitudes of their faith toward donation; they may be misled by old superstitions or misreading of religious texts. If you have questions about your particular faith's view on donation you may wish to discuss them with a clergy member or spiritual advisor.

How are patients needing organs identified to the recovery team?

All 50 states have patients needing an organ transplant listed on a national computer system. This national network provides 24-hour access to the list of patients awaiting lifesaving transplants.

Can organs/tissues be transplanted between sexes and races?

Yes. The determining factors in identifying a possible recipient are the matching of blood type and body size between the donor and the recipient. There is no matching required for tissue transplants.

How long must a patient wait for a transplant?

The time a patient spends on the waiting list for an organ transplant can vary from a few days to several years. The length of their wait is affected by several factors, such as the urgency of their medical condition and the availability of donated organs. Tissue banks have a very limited supply of donated skin, bone, heart valves, tendons and corneas. All patients awaiting an organ or tissue transplant depend upon the generosity of donors and their families to give the gift of life.

Will my family have to pay if I am a donor?

No. Donation is a gift; it costs the donor family nothing. All the costs associated with the recovery of donated organs and tissues are charged to the donor program, then passed on to the transplant center which bills the recipient and his or her insurer. These costs account for only about 12% of the transplant recipient's total bill. Most of the expense is generated by the transplant procedures: hospital costs, surgeons' and doctors' fees, medication, and aftercare. The donor's family is responsible for the costs of medical treatment prior to death and for funeral expenses, just as they would be if there were no donation.

Isn't it cruel to talk to a grieving family about donation?

A number of in-depth studies of families who have donated organs and tissues clearly show that donation can provide immediate comfort and long-lasting consolation. Even families that decide not to donate report they appreciated the opportunity to choose. Studies also indicate that families may experience anger and frustration if they are not given information about donation. Donation tends to give families a sense that something positive has resulted from an otherwise tragic loss -- especially when the donor is young and death is unexpected. Donation will not lessen a family's grief, but it can be a tangible tribute to the individual they have lost.

Can I sell my organs?

No. It is a federal crime, under the National Organ Transplant Act (Public Law 98-507) to sell organs. The punishment for violating the law is a fine up to \$50,000 and/or a maximum of five years imprisonment. Publicity about people raising money for transplants can create the false impression that they are trying to buy organs. In fact, these are usually uninsured patients and their families who are seeking funds to meet the financial requirements of the transplant program.

Do celebrities and rich people receive priority in receiving organs?

No. Factors such as race, gender, age, income, or celebrity status are never considered when determining who receives an organ. The organ allocation and distribution system is based on many factors including blood type, length of time on the waiting list, severity of illness and other medical criteria. There is no way to buy a place on the waiting list.

Will the identity of the recipients be revealed to the donor family?

Occasionally a donor family will correspond directly with or even meet an individual transplanted with their loved one's organ or tissue, but only after both parties have expressed written intention to do so. Typically, the identity of the donor and the recipients are kept confidential. ConnectLife provides the donor's family with basic information about the recipients such as age, sex, profession, and general location. The donor families and transplant recipients may correspond anonymously through the procurement organization and transplant center.

How is brain death determined?

A physician performs a series of tests to determine whether brain death has occurred. Death is indicated if the patient - cannot breathe without assistance, has no pupil response to light, has no response to pain.

Why does the heart continue to beat?

The heart has its own pacemaker, independent of the brain. With oxygen, the heart will continue to beat.

Would removing the respiratory support from a patient be the same as not giving him or her all possible chances for survival?

Once the patient is brain dead, he or she is dead because the brain will not recover. Respiratory support equipment only keeps the heart beating, supplying the vital organs with oxygen.

Does the body of a brain dead patient sometimes begin to deteriorate even if the patient is on life support?

The failure of many organs begins soon after brain death.

Does the patient feel any pain during donation?

No, the person is dead and no longer feels pain.

What is recorded time of death?

The recorded time of death is when the patient is declared dead, not when the heart actually stops beating. There are no clinically documented cases where a patient was declared brain dead and later restored to a normal life. Federal regulations mandate that all families of brain dead patients be offered the option of organ and tissue donation.

What does cardiac death mean?

Cardiac death means the patient is without oxygen. His or her heart has stopped beating. Tissue and eye donation are options after cardiac death has occurred. Some of the options for donation are cornea and sclera, and tissues that include bone, heart valves, veins, skin, and soft connective tissues, such as tendons.

Can somebody donate organs after cardiac death?

In some instances, a person may donate organs after cardiac death has occurred. For non-heart beating organ donation to occur the following circumstances must exist:

- * A patient has suffered devastating and unrecoverable brain damage resulting in ventilator dependency;
- * The family has decided to withdraw mechanical ventilation;
- * Death from cardiac and respiratory arrest will occur within one hour following withdrawal of mechanical support.
- * In this situation, organ recovery would occur only after support is withdrawn and after cardiac death is pronounced.