



Organ, Eye and Tissue Donation

Why is organ, eye and tissue donation so important?

Nearly fifteen-hundred Wisconsin families are waiting for a transplant for a loved one to stay alive. Eighteen people in this country die every day because not enough organs are available.

One donor can save or improve the lives of more than fifty people. Donated organs are used to save the lives of people with organ failure. Donated corneas restore vision for the blind. Donated skin, bone and tissue help repair defects, promote faster healing, save limbs and can save the lives of those with severe burns. Heart valves give patients a chance to resume normal life.

What organs and tissues can be transplanted?

Eight organs can be transplanted: both kidneys, heart, both lungs, liver, pancreas, and small intestine can be transplanted. Corneas, bone, heart valves, connective tissue, and skin are among the tissues that can be transplanted. More than 28,000 organ transplants, 46,000 eye transplants and 750,000 tissue transplants are performed each year in the United States.

Is there a conflict between saving a person's life and donation?

No. Physicians and nurses do everything possible to save a patient's life. Only after they determine that the patient cannot survive does a recovery team become involved.

Is organ, eye and tissue donation difficult on the donating family?

Donation may provide immediate and long-term consolation, especially in light of sudden, unexpected circumstances. The family members of the donor often feel encouraged that something good has come out of something tragic.

May I become a donor if I have had cancer?

Yes, it may be possible to be a donor if you have had cancer. Medical professionals will assess if your organs and tissues are suitable for transplantation at the time of donation and they look at each case on an individual basis.

What is the age limit for organ, eye and tissue donation?

People of all ages--from infants to seniors-- may become donors. There are no set age limits for donation. Again, medical professionals will evaluate at the time of death whether an individual's organs and tissues can be transplanted.

What is the cost to the donor family?

There is no cost to the family. All costs for recovery of donated organs, eyes and tissues are passed on to transplant recipients and their insurance providers. The donor's family pays only for the medical care provided before death and normal funeral expenses.

Will donation affect the appearance of the donor?

Great care is taken to preserve the donor's appearance through the delicate surgical procedures that occur during organ and tissue recovery. Funeral directors work to restore the body for viewing and visitation. You can still have an open-casket funeral if that is your choice.

Does my religion allow donation?

Most major religions in the U.S. support donation as a gift of life to fellow human beings.

What steps do I take to be a donor in Wisconsin?

Say "yes" to donation when you apply for or renew your Wisconsin Driver's License or state-issued ID card. You can also place a "donor dot" on the front of your license without going to the DMV office. The most important step is to tell your family about your decision, as they will be asked for consent at the time of your passing and need to know your wishes regarding donation.

For more information: donatelifewisconsin.org

Donate Life Wisconsin, Inc.

*American Liver Foundation
Wisconsin Chapter*

*American Tissue Services
Foundation*

Blood Center of Wisconsin

*Froedtert Memorial Lutheran
Hospital*

Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin

*Musculoskeletal Transplant
Foundation*

*National Kidney
Foundation of Wisconsin*

*Kristie Nielson-Corning
Donor Mom*

*Paul Oldam, Transplant Recipient,
Member At-Large*

RTI Donor Services

UW Health Transplant Services

*UW Health Organ
Procurement Organization*

*Wisconsin Department of
Health and Family Services*

Wisconsin Donor Network

Wisconsin Tissue Bank