



Discover the facts about organ and tissue donation

I've already registered. I don't need to tell my family.

Reality:

You do need to discuss your decision with your family and friends, even if you have registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register (or, in some states, on your driver's licence). Donation won't proceed without your family's consent. Families are less likely to give consent for donation if they do not know the wishes of the deceased. That's why every family is encouraged to discuss and know each other's wishes.

I'm too old, too young or not healthy enough to donate.

Reality:

Almost any one can donate their organs and tissue. While your age and medical history will be considered, you shouldn't assume you are too old, too young or not healthy enough. There's every chance that some of your organs and tissues will be suitable for donation. Only some medical conditions may prevent you from being a donor, such as transmissible diseases like HIV.

Doctors won't work as hard to save my life if they know I'm a donor.

Reality:

Not so. Medical staff do everything possible to save lives. Their first duty is to you and saving your life. Organ and tissue donation will only be considered after all efforts fail and you have been legally declared dead. Usually, the Australian Organ Donor Register is only checked after you have died.

In most cases, a person may only be able to donate organs where they have been declared brain dead in an intensive care unit in hospital. Brain death is when blood circulation to the brain ceases, and the brain stops functioning and dies with no possibility of recovery. A series of tests carried out by two independent and appropriately qualified senior doctors establishes that brain death has occurred.

People are sometimes confused about the difference between brain death and coma. Brain death is completely different from coma. A patient in a coma is unconscious because their brain is injured in some way, but their brain can continue to function and may heal. Medical tests can clearly distinguish between brain death and coma.

Organ donation may also be possible after a person's heart has stopped beating, referred to as cardiac death, but this is less common. A far greater number of people have the opportunity to donate tissue for transplantation. Tissue donation does not require the donor's death to have occurred in the same limited circumstances as organ donation for transplantation to be successful.

Organ donation is against my religion.

Reality:

Most religions support organ and tissue donation as generous acts that benefit people. This includes Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. If you are not sure whether your religion is supportive, speak to your religious adviser. You can also read or download a fact sheet on organ and tissue donation in relation to all the major religions at www.donatelife.gov.au

My organs and tissue will be used for research.

Reality:

Organ donation is about helping save or improve other people's lives. Donated tissues and organs will never be used for medical research unless explicit written permission is given by your family.

My family won't be able to view my body.

Reality:

Yes they will. The removal of organs and tissue is no different from any other surgical operation, and is performed by highly skilled health professionals. The donor's body is always treated with dignity and respect. The donation of organs and tissue does not alter the physical appearance of the body, your family will be able to view your body and have an open casket if they wish.

I don't need to donate because thousands of others do.

Reality:

Few people die in such a way that donation is possible. Organ and tissue donors need to die in hospital where their body can be kept on a ventilator until the organs can be donated. Only 247 people donated organs last year. There are some 1700 Australians on official waiting lists at any one time.





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People only need organs because of bad lifestyle choices.

Reality:

Many people have an inherited genetic condition, a severe illness or disease that will kill them, often at a young age. Common genetic conditions are cardiomyopathy (which affects the heart), cystic fibrosis (the lungs) and biliary atresia (the liver). Corneal transplants restore sight to people following a disease or damage to their eyes. Heart valves are used to repair congenital defects in young children and replace defective valves due to disease such as rheumatic fever, degeneration and infection.

I lived in the UK during 'mad cow' disease

Reality:

You can still donate your organs and tissues.

There won't be any support for my family.

Reality:

The Intensive Care Unit team caring for you and the DonateliLife donor coordinator give the family as much support as they need during and after the decision to donate.

Families considering organ and tissue donation will also have access to free bereavement counselling.

The DonateliLife donor coordinator will be the family's point of contact from the time donation is first discussed. They provide the link between the family and the medical team and will help the family after the donation, particularly with arranging a private farewell and/or a viewing of the body, if the family wishes.

The coordinator will contact the donor family with details of support offered in their state or territory. The coordinator can, if the family wishes, provide information on the outcomes of the donation and give details on how to write anonymously to the recipients.

I'm not sure if I am registered.

Reality:

You can check and update – or register – your details on the Australian Organ Donor Register at www.medicare.gov.au, call 1800 777 203 or visit any Medicare office.

In Australia you can donate your organs – heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and pancreas – and tissues – heart valves and pericardium, corneal and eye tissue, bone and related musculoskeletal tissue and skin tissue. You record which organs and tissue you want to donate on the Australian Organ Donor Register.

Remember to discuss your wishes with your family.

DISCOVER the facts about organ and tissue donation
Make an informed choice and **DECIDE** about becoming a donor
DISCUSS your decision with the people close to you.
Find out more at www.donateliLife.gov.au

Authorised by the Australian Government, Capital Hill, Canberra.

