

Please accept our most sincere gratitude for the donation of your loved one's tissue. We recognize that this is a difficult time for you and your family. Taking that into consideration, we hope you find the information on the next pages supportive of your decision to donate.

The Gift of Tissue Donation



MTF Musculoskeletal
Transplant
Foundation

*Changing Lives
Through Tissue Donation*

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A MEMBER OF THE COALITION ON DONATION

Answers To Questions About Tissue Donation



WITH RECENT MEDICAL ADVANCES, donated human tissue can now be used to replace diseased or damaged tissue in others. Through your loved one's donation, as many as 50 or more people may be helped. For example, donated bone often avoids the need for amputation due to bone cancer. Donated heart valves "grow" with young patients, and reduce the need for repeated surgeries. Orthopedic and neurological surgeons make use of donated joints, bone, tendons and ligaments to treat patients with spinal deformities, severe arthritis or trauma. Also, donated bone and skin is used for facial reconstruction due to illness, trauma or disease. Donated skin allows burn victims to heal faster, reducing their risk of serious infection or complications from their burns. Donated skin can also be used to repair facial disfigurements, damaged or diseased vocal cords or bladders. Tissue recipients can generally return to normal function with minimal recuperation and rehabilitation. This year it is estimated that over 500,000 patients will benefit from tissue donation.

Why were we asked so many questions about our loved one's medical history and lifestyle?

Recovery agencies must evaluate the medical and social histories of all donors. As part of that evaluation, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that a series of questions be asked about your loved one. These questions are very similar to questions that are asked when blood is donated. We know that the questions are very personal, but they are necessary to ensure that tissues can be safely recovered and transplanted into recipients.

How are tissues removed?

In a sterile surgical procedure, the bones, skin, heart (for valves), veins and other tissues are carefully removed in an operating room setting. The body is treated with dignity and respect. After the recovery, the body is carefully reconstructed with bone and joint substitutes, and the incisions are closed with suture material.

What does "consent for research mean?"

When tissue cannot be used for transplantation, every effort will be made to use the tissue for approved research. Examples of research projects include evaluating new disease treatments, developing better transplantation and surgical techniques, and developing of new medications. Using tissue for research may only be done if you gave consent for research.

Will I be responsible for any cost of the donation?

No. Donor programs pay all hospital costs associated with tissue donation. Funeral services, however, are outside the tissue donation process. If there are additional fees for the preparation of a tissue donor for a funeral, they should be paid by the donor program.

After our donation, how is our gift prepared for transplantation?

After recovery, the tissues may be sent to non-profit or for-profit organizations for specialized preparation.

In some cases, tissues remain whole and in others, they are prepared into varying sizes and shapes to fit the recipient's needs. Tissues are preserved for use within five years. During each step from donation to recovery through preparation and transplantation, those who are involved with your donation realize the precious nature of your gift and your intent that it help others.

When will the tissues be transplanted?

Eyes, skin, veins and heart valves are usually made available to recipients within days to weeks from the time of donation. It takes an average of four months for musculoskeletal tissues such as bones, tendons and ligaments to be prepared for transplantation. During this time, physicians review lab test results and other medical information. If an autopsy was performed on your loved one, a report of that procedure must be received before making the tissue available to hospitals. Since tissues are preserved, they may be available for recipients for up to five years, however most of the tissues are transplanted within the first year after donation.

Can I receive information about the recipients?

You should receive acknowledgement of your gift from the donor program, including general information about recipients that is available at that time. You can also request additional information about the recipients. An attempt to gather general information about recipients is made, however the reporting of tissue recipient information by surgeons and hospitals is voluntary. Therefore, records are often incomplete. Because tissues may be stored up to five years, there may be significant delays in complete recipient information becoming available.

Please accept our thanks for allowing us the privilege of caring for your loved one. On behalf of those you have helped, we express gratitude for your loved one's gift.