

Organ and Tissue Donation

Why donate?

Donating organs and tissue provides many societal benefits. Currently, the need for organ transplants far exceeds the availability of donated organs and tissue. You could potentially save as many as eight lives through organ donation and tissue donation. Unfortunately, thousands die each year waiting for an organ donation that never arrives. You have the power to change that.

How to become a donor

The most important thing to do is to sign up as an organ and tissue donor in your state's donor registry. In addition to signing up in your state's donor registry, you should consider also doing the following:

- Designate your donation decision on your driver's license.
- Tell your family about your donation decision.
- Tell your physician, faith leader, and friends.
- Include your donation decision in your advance directives, will, and living will.

What can be donated

Organs

Currently, the kidneys, heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, and intestines are organs that can be donated. Donated organs must be used within hours of removal from the donor's body. Although most donated organs come from individuals who have died, a living individual can donate a kidney, part of the pancreas, part of a lung, part of the liver, or part of the intestine.

Tissue

Corneas, the middle ear, skin, heart valves, bone, veins, cartilage, tendons, and ligaments can be stored in tissue banks and used to restore sight, cover burns, repair hearts, replace veins, and mend damaged connective tissue and cartilage in recipients.

Stem cells, blood and platelets

Stem cells, blood, and platelets of healthy individuals of a certain age can also be donated, depending on the match between the donor and recipient.