

Helpful Funeral Information shared by:

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Organ & Tissue Donations

In practice, donations cannot be carried out without the consent of next-of-kin. Advance discussion of donation with family members is just as important as signing a card. In a time of extreme stress and grief, a signed donor card and knowledge of the individual's wishes will help families make their decision about donation.

1. Who can become a donor?
2. Will my decision interfere with my own health care?
3. How will medical personnel know that I am a donor?
4. Who pays for the donation procedure?
5. How are the organs and tissues distributed?
6. Does my age or medical history matter?
7. Will I have to change my funeral arrangements?
8. Can I change my mind about becoming a donor?

Question #1 Who can become a donor?

Answer: Anyone who is 18 or older and of sound mind may become a donor when he or she dies. Minors may become donors with a parent's or guardian's consent.

Question #2 Will my decision interfere with my own health care?

Answer: No. Medical personnel must follow strict guidelines before they can pronounce death and remove the donor's organs and tissues. Organ and tissue donors receive the same health care as non-donors.

Question #3 How will medical personnel know that I am a donor?

Answer: Medical personnel will know by your carrying of a "Donor Card". You should distribute copies to your family, doctors, the funeral home that holds your pre-arranged services, and attorney.

Question #4 Who pays for the donation procedure?

Answer: The organ donation programs, funded through health care, pay for all costs involved in the organ donation and recovery.

Question #5 How are the organs and tissues distributed?

Answer: The distributions of organs is handled by regional organ banks which are linked to a national computer network that allows them to speed the process of matching organ donors and recipients. Tissue distribution is coordinated by various tissue banks throughout the country.

Question #6 Does my age or medical history matter?

Answer: Although most programs do have age restrictions for organs, it should not influence your decision to become a donor. The transplant team will decide at the time of donation whether the organs or tissues are useful for donation. If the organs or tissues can't be transplanted, it is possible that the organs or tissues may be helpful in medical research.

Question #7 Will I have to change my funeral arrangements?

Answer: Within reason, organ donation does not delay funeral arrangements or disfigure the body, so no changes will be needed in your funeral plans. If you plan to donate your body for medical research, you should be sure to arrange all of the details with your local anatomical board.

Question #8 Can I change my mind about becoming a donor?

Answer: Absolutely, simply tear up your donor card. Anyone that you have told about your donation request should be notified of this change. Tell family members, doctors, the funeral home, and if you have made arrangements to have your status indicated on your driver's license be sure to contact the driver's license office to have your status changed.