



MYTHS

VS  
FACTS

ABOUT ORGAN DONATION



RECYCLEYOURSELF



## *I THOUGHT...*

**MY HEALTH ISSUES WOULD RESTRICT ME FROM DONATING.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Anyone and everyone can sign up to be a donor regardless of medical history. Organ and tissue viability will be evaluated at the time of death or to evaluate for living donation.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**MY RELIGION MIGHT NOT SUPPORT ORGAN DONATION.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Most major religions in the U.S. do support donation and view it as a final, selfless gift.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HAVE AN OPEN CASKET FUNERAL AFTER DONATION.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

If an open casket funeral was an option before donation, it will still be an option after donation. Donors are always treated with the utmost respect.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**DONATING MY ORGANS IS EXPENSIVE AND WOULD LEAVE MY FAMILY WITH EXPENSIVE HOSPITAL BILLS.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Your donation costs nothing extra to your family.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**PEOPLE MIGHT TAKE MY ORGANS AND SELL THEM ON THE BLACK MARKET.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Federal law prohibits buying and selling organs in the U.S. and violators are punished to the fullest extent of the law.

## *I THOUGHT...*

**DOCTORS WOULDN'T TRY TO SAVE MY LIFE BECAUSE I'VE REGISTERED AS A ORGAN AND TISSUE DONOR.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Doctors are never authorized to remove any organs until the donor is declared brain dead and all known life saving measures have failed.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**I COULD ONLY DONATE AFTER I'VE DIED.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Thousands of living donors are able to donate healthy organs each year. A living donation is a viable option and common for kidney, partial liver, and partial lung donations. Living donation is also possible with blood and bone marrow.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**TV SHOWS AND MOVIES MAKE ORGAN DONATION LOOK DANGEROUS, UNORGANIZED AND MESSY.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

Organ donation has been subject to dramatization in TV and movies in the past. This perpetuates misconceptions about organ donation that simply aren't true.

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## *I THOUGHT...*

**MY AGE WOULD RESTRICT ME FROM DONATING.**

## *THE TRUTH IS...*

There's no age limit to organ donation. Donors under 18 can make their decision known to their guardians.



**Q: WHAT IS A DONOR REGISTRY?**

**A:** A Donor Registry is a secure and confidential state-wide database listing everyone who has indicated their decision to be an organ, eye and tissue donor. The donor database is accessible only to authorized employees of organ, eye and tissue procurement agencies. It is not accessible to hospital personnel.

**Q: HOW CAN I JOIN MY STATE'S DONOR REGISTRY?**

**A:** Visit [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net).

**Q: IS MY INFORMATION IN A DONOR REGISTRY SECURE?**

**A:** Yes. All personal information is kept confidential. The law prohibits donor registry information from being sold or shared with any company or government agency. Your information is stored in a secure database, accessible only to authorized organ, eye and tissue recovery personnel. It is not accessible to hospital personnel.

**Q: WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?**

**A:** Those who sign up online may remove their name from the Donor Registry, alter their personal information, or change donation preferences at any time. If you signed up through DMV, all changes must be made at DMV, unless otherwise noted.

**Q: WHAT IF MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY ARE OPPOSED TO DONATION?**

**A:** If you are 18 or older, you may join your state's Donor Registry as an advanced directive. You should still inform your family of your decision. Upon your death, the recovery organization will inform them of your decision to be a donor and will involve them in the donation process, but will not ask them for authorization.

**Q: WILL MY MEDICAL CARE BE AFFECTED IF PEOPLE KNOW I AM A DONOR?**

**A:** Never! Your commitment to donation will not interfere with your medical care. If you are sick or injured and admitted to the hospital, the number one priority is to save your life. Furthermore, organ, eye and tissue recovery happens only after all life-saving efforts have been exhausted and death has been legally declared.

**Q: I'VE BEEN SICK LATELY OR IN THE PAST. CAN I BE A DONOR?**

**A:** Yes. At the time of death, trained recovery coordinators will review your medical history to determine what can be donated. Recent advances in transplantation have allowed more people to become eligible donors. Every person who supports donation is encouraged to join their state's Registry regardless of medical history.

**Q: WHAT CAN BE DONATED AFTER DEATH AND HOW MANY LIVES CAN BE CHANGED?**

**A:** Organs that can be donated after death include: kidneys, heart, liver, lungs, pancreas and intestine. Tissue that can be donated includes: heart valves, corneas, skin, bone, ligaments, tendons, fascia, veins and nerves. One organ donor can save up to 8 lives. One tissue donor can heal 50 or more lives.

**Q: CAN YOU DONATE AN ORGAN WHILE YOU ARE STILL ALIVE?**

**A:** Certain kinds of transplants can be done through the generosity of living donors. Almost 42% of all kidney transplants are performed with living donors, who are often related to the person needing the transplant. People can live normal lives with just one healthy kidney. Also, there are new methods for transplanting a part of a living adult's liver to a child or even another adult who needs a liver transplant. Parts of a lung from two living donors can also be transplanted into one person.

**Q: HOW DOES DECEASED DONATION WORK?**

**A:** Donors are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure their organs and tissues are medically suitable for transplant. After this evaluation, organs and tissues receive further testing before they are approved for transplantation. Visit Donate Life Northwest for an extensive explanation of the deceased donation process. (<http://www.donatelifenw.org/content/donation>).

**Q: CAN CELEBRITIES OR WEALTHY PEOPLE USE THEIR MONEY AND INFLUENCE TO BUY AN ORGAN OR BE PLACED AT THE TOP OF THE WAITING LIST?**

**A:** No. Income and celebrity status are not considered when determining who on the U.S. waiting list receives an organ. Also, it is a federal crime to buy or sell organs and tissue in the United States. Donor organs are matched to potential recipients by blood type, tissue type, size, medical urgency, time on waiting list and geographic location through a national computerized waiting list operated by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS).

**Q: WILL ORGAN, EYE OR TISSUE DONATION DELAY OR CHANGE FUNERAL PLANS?**

**A:** No. Donation typically causes no delay or change in funeral arrangements. If an open-casket viewing was possible before donation, it should be possible after donation.

**Q: CAN I SELL MY ORGANS, EYES OR TISSUES?**

**A:** It is against federal law to receive or offer money for human organs or tissues in the U.S.



**Q: CAN MY ORGANS BE USED IF I DIE AT HOME?**

**A:** No. Organs can be donated only by individuals on a ventilator who die in a hospital of brain death, or in some cases, seriously brain-injured patients can donate organs after cardiac death. However, tissue and eye donation can occur when someone dies at home within 24 hours of death. Your family needs to tell the medical personnel and funeral home of the desire to donate.

**Q: WHAT IS BRAIN DEATH, AND CAN YOU RECOVER FROM IT?**

**A:** All death occurs from cessation of cardiopulmonary (heart-lung) function or from the cessation of brain function. Brain death occurs when a person has an irreversible, catastrophic brain injury, which causes all brain activity to permanently stop. You can never recover from brain death, which the public often confuses with brain damage. Brain damage means there are some portions of the brain still functioning and people can continue to live. In brain death cases, the heart and lungs can continue to function if artificial-support machines are used. However, these functions will cease when the machines are discontinued. The standards for determining that someone is brain dead are strict. After brain death, an individual has the potential to be an organ, cornea and tissue donor. After cardiac death, an individual has the potential to be a cornea and tissue donor and on occasion, an organ donor.

**Q: CAN SMOKERS BE DONORS?**

**A:** Yes. Organ function, including lung function, is assessed at the time of death, and if the organs are healthy, they can be used.

**Q: WHO CAN BE AN EYE DONOR?**

**A:** Anyone can. Cataracts, poor eyesight, Lasik or age don't prevent you from donating corneas.

**Q: IS THE WHOLE EYE TRANSPLANTED?**

**A:** No. The cornea can be transplanted to restore sight. The sclera (white part) can sometimes be used to repair damaged eye tissue and the entire eye may be used for research and education.

**Q: HOW SUCCESSFUL IS CORNEA TRANSPLANTATION?**

**A:** More than 90% of all cornea transplant operations successfully restore the recipient's vision.