

Frequently Asked Questions

Does organ, eye and tissue donation really help people?

- Organ transplants are life-saving operations. People on the transplant waiting list are suffering organ failure from conditions such as heart failure and kidney disease. Without the help of a generous gift of life from an organ donor they will die.
- Tissue transplants are life-saving and/or life-enhancing operations. They save the lives of recovering burn victims, help blind people to see and allow people to walk again.
- Post-transplant organ, eye and tissue recipients can live healthy, active lives that weren't possible when they were ill. Most recipients make such an amazing recovery, you would not know that they received a transplant unless they told you.

Who can be a registered organ, eye and tissue donor?

- Anyone can be considered for organ, eye and tissue donation.
- Trained and experienced medical professionals make decisions about medical suitability of organs at the time of death.
- Everyone, regardless of age or medical history, is encouraged to sign up as a donor.

How do I become a registered organ, eye and tissue donor?

- Simply check “YES! I want to be an organ and tissue donor” when you renew or apply for your driver license or ID card through the DMV.

OR

- Anyone age 13 or older can sign up online anytime or learn more about organ, eye and tissue donation by visiting www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org.

Can I set limitations on the organs, eyes and tissues I would like to donate?

- Saying “YES!” to donation on your driver license indicates your consent for all organs, eyes and tissues for transplant and research.
- If you would like to specify which organs and tissues you would like to donate, visit www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org.

What if I change my mind?

- You can remove your registration anytime at www.donateLIFEcalifornia.org or by calling us at 866-797-2366.

Does the donor's family incur the cost of donation?

- There is no cost to the donor's family for organ, eye and tissue donation.
- All costs related to donation are paid by the organ procurement organization (OPO).
- By law, expenses related to saving the individual's life and funeral expenses remain the responsibility of the donor's family.

What if an individual registered to be a donor but their family is opposed to donation?

- If an individual 18 years or older has recorded his/her personal decision, it must be honored if medically possible.
- State and federal laws support the donor's right to make the decision and have it carried out.
- Information about the individual's decision will be communicated to the family members before donation occurs. They will be emotionally supported throughout the donation process.

Can the donor family meet the recipient(s)?

- Organ, eye and tissue donation is a confidential process. No pressure is placed on donor families or transplant recipients to meet or make contact with one another.
- Shortly after donation, the donor family and recipient(s) will receive general information about one another. No identifying details are shared unless consent has been given by both parties. Organ recovery organizations and the transplant centers can arrange contact if the desire is mutual.

How is the organ allocation process determined?

- If someone needs an organ transplant, his or her name is added to the national transplant waiting list. The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) is the organization in charge of the waiting list.
- UNOS works with organ procurement organizations to match available organs to recipients in need.
- Through extensive testing, information about blood type and genetic make-up for each transplantable organ is obtained. This information is utilized to develop a list of suitable recipients prioritized by considering factors such as medical urgency, tissue type, length of time on the waiting list, blood type, and body size.
- Geographic location is also considered in placement. Organs are offered in accordance to proximity to the donor.
- There is no discrimination due to age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, or social/financial status when determining who receives an organ.

Will doctors still work hard to save a patient who is a registered donor?

- It is only after every attempt has been made to save a patient's life and death has been declared that the donation process begins.
- The doctors who work to save your life are not the same doctors involved in the recovery and transplantation of your donated organs.

Will funeral arrangements be possible after donation?

- Funeral arrangements, including an open casket, will not be affected by the decision to donate.

Can organs, eyes and tissues be given to different ethnic groups or individuals of the opposite sex?

- Gender does not influence the allocation of donated organs, eyes or tissues.
- Although it is possible for a candidate to match a donor from another ethnic group, often transplant success rates increase (due to tissue compatibility) when organs are matched between members of the same ethnic background.
- In California, ethnic minorities make up more than 70 percent of the people on the National Transplant Waiting List.

- Make sure your family is aware of your donation decision. Knowing your intentions will provide comfort to your family.
- Most families want to follow through on their loved ones' final life-giving wishes.
- The next of kin of registered donors under the age of 18 still must consent to donation before it can be carried out.