



Organ and Tissue Donation Myths

More than 120,000 people in the United States are on the national transplant waiting list for a life-saving organ transplant. More than 22,000 - or 18 percent - are California residents. While 90 percent of Americans say they support donation, less than one in three Californians are registered on the Donate Life California Organ & Tissue Donor Registry. Why the discrepancy? Myths and misconceptions about donation and transplantation – such as those listed below – deter some from registering as a donor. Read on to understand the real facts about organ and tissue donation.

Myth: If I am registered as an organ donor, the hospital staff won't work as hard to save my life.

Truth: 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 the patient's life are not the same doctors involved in the recovery and transplantation of donated organs. Only if the patient is medically suitable to donate and after the family has been informed of the patient's imminent death, is the opportunity to donate discussed with the family. After the family has been presented with documentation of the patient's donor designation – which legally grants authorization to recover organs and/or tissues – or in cases where there is no registration or donor card present, and the family grants authorization, does the process move forward.

Myth: I am too old (or too young) to donate.

Truth: There is no age limit for organ and tissue donation. Anyone age 13 or older can register online at anytime, although the final decision is that of the legal guardian(s) until age 18. Conversely, no one should rule themselves out because they are "too old". There has been a 93-year-old kidney donor and a 99-year-old cornea donor!

Myth: My health is not very good. Nobody would want my organs or tissues.

Truth: Anyone can be considered for organ and tissue donation. At the time of death, medical professionals will determine a person's eligibility to become an organ and/or tissue donor. Eighty-five percent of all people will be able to donate life-enhancing tissue, which includes skin, corneas, heart valves, tendons, ligaments, bone and more. Even cancer patients or those positive for hepatitis can potentially donate, and there are cases of donors in their late nineties.

Myth: My family will be charged if I am an organ or tissue donor.

Truth: 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). Expenses related to saving the individual's life and funeral costs remain the responsibility of the donor's family.

Myth: Organ and tissue donors cannot have an open casket funeral.

Truth: Funeral arrangements, including an open casket, will not be affected by the decision to donate. Additionally, donation does not delay funeral services.

Myth: I cannot specify which organs or tissues I'd like to donate.

Truth: Checking "YES!" to donation on your driver license application or renewal form 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, or if you change your mind about donation, you can make changes via the Donate Life California website, www.donateLIFCalifornia.org.

Myth: My religion does not support organ, eye and tissue donation.

Truth: Donation is supported by all major religions as a final act of generosity towards others. If you are unsure or have any questions, please speak with your religious leader.

Myth: Celebrities and wealthy people on the waiting list receive priority for receiving an organ.

Truth: To be placed on the national organ transplant waiting list, medical data must be presented documenting the individual's need for a transplant. Organs are then allocated to those on the national waiting list according to medical need, blood and tissue type, height and weight. Celebrity status and wealth are not considered.

Organ, eye and tissue donation can truly make a difference in someone's life. One organ donor can save up to eight lives, and a tissue donor can impact the lives of up to 75 with their life-enhancing gifts. With such gifts, organ and tissue recipients have the opportunity to live healthy, active lives. And families and loved ones of organ and tissue donors often say that organ donation helped provide comfort to them during a difficult time in their lives.

For questions about organ, eye and tissue donation, or to register as a donor, visit www.donateLIFCalifornia.org or contact us at info@donatelifecalifornia.org or 866-797-2366.