



frequently asked questions

- > **Why is organ and tissue donation important?**
In the U.S., more than 112,000 people are in need of organ transplants and nearly 10,000 people in the greater New York metropolitan area are waiting for organ transplants. On average, a New Yorker dies every day waiting for a transplant. One organ donor can save up to 8 lives and improve more than 50 lives through tissue donation.
- > **What organs and tissues can I donate?**
You can donate your heart, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, liver and intestines. You can also donate eyes and tissues such as heart valves, cardiovascular tissue, bone and soft musculoskeletal tissue and skin.
- > **Who can donate?**
All individuals are considered to be a potential donor. Do not rule yourself out because of age or perceived health status. Each case is considered for medical suitability for donation after death has been declared. Individuals must be at least 16 years old to register.
- > **Will my decision affect my medical care?**
No, strict legal guidelines mean that doctors who treat you have nothing to do with donation and transplantation. Donation is considered only after every effort is made to save the patient's life.
- > **How are organs and tissue matched with potential recipients?**
The Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) maintains a national computerized database of candidates waiting for a transplant. Organs are matched with recipients who are the sickest and the closest match, which includes compatibility of size, blood type, medical urgency and location. Race, income, gender, celebrity, income and social status are never considered.
- > **Is there a cost to my family for donating my organs, tissues or eyes?**
No, there is no cost to a donor's family for donation. The family is only responsible for the hospital expenses incurred before death and normal funeral costs.
- > **Does my religion support donation?**
Most major religions publicly endorse donation as the highest gesture of generosity, compassion and humanitarianism. At a minimum, it is a matter of individual conscience.
- > **Will donation interfere with funeral arrangements?**
No, throughout the donation process, the body is treated with care and respect. Organs, eyes and tissues are recovered with respect in an operating room under sterile conditions. An open casket funeral is possible and funeral services can be held.
- > **Will the recipient know who the donor was?**
The identity of the donor, the donor's family and the recipient(s) are confidential. A recipient can know the donor's sex, age and state of residence. If a recipient or donor family member wishes to obtain more information, they can submit a request in writing to their transplant center. Both parties must agree to the sharing of additional information.
- > **How do I sign up to be a donor?**
Enroll in the New York State Donate Life Registry, a confidential database administered by the New York State Department of Health. Individuals can sign up at the New York DMV when you apply for or renew your driver's license or non-driver ID, or when registering to vote. New York City residents may also register when they apply for their IDNYC card or online at donatelife.ny.gov.