

All About Donation

What is organ, eye and tissue donation?

The process of recovering organs, eyes and tissues from a deceased person and transplanting them into others in order to save lives or improve the health of those in need.

What difference can one donor make?

One organ donor can save the lives of nine transplant recipients. One tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 150 people. One cornea donor can bring sight to two people.

What organs and tissues may be donated from one donor?

The transplantable organs are the heart, two lungs, two kidneys, split liver, pancreas and intestines. The heart, lungs, kidneys and liver are the most commonly transplantable organs. A pancreas transplant is successful in curing Type 1 diabetes. Intestinal transplants save the lives of patients whose intestines have been severely damaged through illness, trauma or birth defects.

Commonly recovered and transplantable tissues enhance the lives of many who suffer from traumatic injury or disease.

- Skin is used as a temporary dressing for burns, serious abrasions and other exposed areas.
- Bone is used in orthopedic surgery to facilitate healing of fractures or to prevent amputation.
- Heart valves are used to replace defective valves, often in children.
- Tendons are used to repair torn ligaments on knees or other joints.
- Veins are used in cardiac bypass surgery.
- Corneas can restore sight to the blind.

How can organs and tissues be used for therapy?

Pancreatic islet cells produce insulin and are used in the treatment of diabetes. Hepatocytes are liver cells used in the treatment of certain liver diseases. Sometimes a donor's cells are used for these life saving treatments.

How can organs and tissues be used for research?

Organs and tissues that are not recovered for transplant may be used for medical research if the donor (or family, in lieu of a Donor Registry record) authorizes it. Non-transplantable organs and tissues help researchers find new ways to treat diseases.