



# ORGAN DONATION

## A GIFT FOR LIFE

Organ transplantation holds the promise of life for thousands of patients with life-threatening conditions and diseases. The generosity of donor families, who at a time of great tragedy decide to help others, is immeasurable. However, the number of patients on the waiting list continues to increase daily. Currently, more than 98,000 people in the U.S. await organ transplantation. Eighteen people die every day because not enough organs are available. You can help! Just one donor can save many lives.

### THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES:

- In the U.S. last year, more than 26,000 organ transplants were performed using the gifts for life from more than 13,200 donors, both living and deceased.
- More than 7,400 families donated their loved one's organs in 2007.
- In Wisconsin there are currently almost 1,600 people on the waiting list for an organ transplant.
- Every 13 minutes a new name is added to the waiting list.

### WHO IS IN NEED?

- Any one of us could someday be in need of a transplant. People with diabetes, high blood pressure, cystic fibrosis and other common illnesses are on the waiting list.
- People of all ages are waiting for transplants, in fact people under the age of 49 make up almost 50 percent of the waiting list.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Individuals can indicate their desire to be a donor by including the "orange dot" on their driver's license or state ID, or by signing a donor card. Most importantly, share your commitment to organ and tissue donation by discussing this fact with your family.
- Advances in technology allow more people than ever to be donors, even those over 70 years of age and those with previous medical conditions.

### TO LEARN MORE:

University of Wisconsin Organ Procurement	(608) 265-0356	<a href="http://www.uwhcopo.org">www.uwhcopo.org</a>
United Network for Organ Sharing	(800) 292-9537	<a href="http://www.unos.org">www.unos.org</a>
National Coalition on Donation	(804) 782-4920	<a href="http://www.donatelife.net">www.donatelife.net</a>
Wisconsin Coalition on Donation		<a href="http://www.donatelifewisconsin.org">www.donatelifewisconsin.org</a>
Department of Health and Human Services	(301) 443-7577	<a href="http://www.organdonor.gov">www.organdonor.gov</a>
American Association of Tissue Banks	(703) 827-9582	<a href="http://www.aatb.org">www.aatb.org</a>
Eye Bank Association of America	(202) 775-4999	<a href="http://www.restoresight.org">www.restoresight.org</a>



# THE TRUTH ABOUT ORGAN DONATION

Making a decision about organ donation comes, for many families, at a time of great stress, anxiety and sadness. By understanding the facts about organ donation, you can educate and prepare your family about your decision to become a donor, and they will find peace knowing they've carried out your wishes.

## **WHO CAN BE A DONOR?**

Anyone can sign-up to be a donor—even if you have pre-existing medical conditions. At the time of death, the appropriate medical professionals will review the patient's medical and social histories to determine the eligibility for donation.

## **WHAT ORGANS CAN BE DONATED?**

Organs that can be donated include heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, pancreas and intestine.

## **IF I'M A DONOR, WILL MY DOCTORS STILL TRY TO SAVE MY LIFE?**

Organ recovery takes place only after all efforts to save a patient's life have been exhausted and death has been declared. The medical team treating the patient is a completely separate team from the transplant team.

## **IS THERE A COST TO THE DONOR OR THEIR FAMILY?**

There is no cost to the donor's family or estate. Donation is a gift.

## **WILL MY RELIGIOUS BELIEFS INTERFERE WITH MY WISH TO BE A DONOR?**

All of the widely-known religions: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism—fully support donation and consider it an act of charity. Check with your faith leader if you are unsure of your religion's position on organ donation.

## **WILL DONATION DISFIGURE THE BODY OR MAKE AN OPEN CASKET FUNERAL IMPOSSIBLE?**

Donation does not cause disfigurement to a patient's body. Organs are recovered through a surgical incision in the chest and abdominal area that can be covered by clothing. Families can still have an open-casket funeral if that is their wish.

## **DO WEALTHY PEOPLE RECEIVE ORGANS BEFORE OTHERS?**

The length of time it takes to receive a transplant is governed by many factors, including: blood type, length of time on the waiting list, severity of illness and other medical criteria. Factors such as race, gender, age, income or celebrity status are not considered when determining who receives an organ.