

Frequently Asked Questions

SIGNING UP

Who may sign up on the Wisconsin Donor Registry?

The Wisconsin Donor Registry allows Wisconsin citizens who are at least 15½ years of age to register as an organ, tissue and eye donor upon their death.

Can my family override my decision to donate?

Once you register as a donor, you have made a record of anatomical gift in accordance with Wisconsin state law. If you are at least 18 years old or an emancipated minor, your decision may not be overridden by your family or any other person. Donation professionals will present to your family documentation of your inclusion in the Wisconsin Donor Registry and work with them to honor that decision.

Why register? Isn't it enough to have a donor card or orange dot on my driver license?

Most of the time a person's driver's license or donor card is not readily available to the family or donation professionals. The Registry allows donation professionals to find out if a person has registered as a donor by signing in to a secure website maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

If I already have an orange dot on my driver's license, will my name automatically be transferred to the Registry?

The orange donor dot on your driver's license does not automatically enroll you as a donor in the Registry database. Register online at YesIWillWisconsin.com or you may register when you apply for or renew your driver's license at the Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles.

Who can be a donor?

Anyone can register to be a donor, even if you have pre-existing medical conditions. At the time of passing, donation professionals will review the patient's medical and social histories, and current medical tests, to determine eligibility for donation.

How do you ensure that someone does not sign up another person without his or her knowledge or consent?

There are 50 state donor registries now in operation and none have reported problems with persons registering people other than themselves. The legitimacy of the registrant can be determined using the date/time of the registration and personal information requested during the signup process. Family members are also consulted at the time of donation and will be able to verify the donor's information at that time.

Does the Registry allow me to sign up to be a marrow or living organ donor?

No. Please use the websites listed below for information about donating blood, bone marrow, or an organ before your death:

Blood Donation: The American Red Cross: www.redcrossblood.org
The BloodCenter of Wisconsin: www.bcw.edu

Bone Marrow: The BloodCenter of Wisconsin: www.bcw.edu
National Bone Marrow Registry: www.marrows.org

Living Organ Donation: Children's Hospital of Wisconsin: www.chw.org
Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital: www.froedtert.com
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center: www.aurorahealthcare.org
UW Hospital and Clinics: www.uwhealth.org/livingdonor

Does my registration give consent for whole body donation?

Signing up on the Registry does not grant permission for your body to be donated to medical schools. Donation for transplant or research is not the same as willed body donation. Willed whole body programs are usually associated with teaching hospitals at major universities, and arrangements must be made in advance directly with the institutions. Please note: should you choose to consent to whole body donation, you will be unable to donate your organs, tissue or eyes for transplant.

How do people in other states sign up to be a donor? Is there a national registry?

There is no national registry. All matters concerning organ, tissue and eye donation are under the jurisdiction of each state's respective laws.

What if I don't have an e-mail account or access to a computer?

You may sign up at your neighborhood library or use a friend or relative's internet access by visiting the www.YesIWillWisconsin.com website.

I don't want to sign up online. Is there any other way to register?

You may register to be a donor when you apply for or renew your driver's license or ID card through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV). If you are unable to sign up online or through the DMV, you may sign a donor card to indicate your wishes. However, please share your decision with your family in case the donor card is not available at the time of your death.

What should I do after registering?

Share your decision with your family in case the donor card is not available at the time of your death.

Who is responsible for administering the Registry?

The Wisconsin Donor Registry is authorized by s. 157.06(20) Stats., and maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

How can I be sure my information is kept confidential?

As a state-authorized public service, the Wisconsin Donor Registry adheres to the strictest and most up-to-date guidelines to keep all personal information confidential. We assure you that every precaution is in place to protect the information. Of the 50 state donor registries now in operation across the country, there are no reported problems with unauthorized access to personal information.

DONATION INFORMATION

What is organ, tissue and eye donation?

Donation is the process of recovering organs, tissues and eyes from a deceased person and transplanting them into others in order to save or improve the lives of those in need. Up to eight lives can be saved through organ donation, and another 50 or more lives may be improved through eye and tissue donation.

Where can I learn more about organ, tissue and eye donation?

For general donation information, go to www.donatelifewisconsin.org or www.donatelife.net.

How many people need donated organs, tissue and eyes?

There are more than 2,200 people on waiting lists for organ transplants in Wisconsin and more than 121,000 nationwide. Hundreds are waiting for a cornea transplant to restore their sight. Thousands more wait for the chance to live without pain through a bone or soft tissue transplant.

What organs, tissues and eyes may be donated?

There are eight organs that may be transplanted: heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small intestine. Donated tissue includes skin for treating burn patients, serious abrasions, hernia repairs and reconstructive surgeries for patients such as breast cancer survivors. Bone is used in orthopedic surgery to facilitate healing of fractures or prevent amputation. Heart valves are used to replace defective valves. Tendons are used to repair torn ligaments on knees or other joints. Veins are used in surgeries. Corneas can restore sight to the blind.

DONATION PROCESS

If I am registered as a donor, will my medical care be affected?

Medical and nursing care is not affected in any way by your status as a registered donor. Every attempt is made to save your life. In fact, patients must receive the most aggressive life-saving care in order to be potential organ donors. The medical team that works to save your life is a separate team from those who procure the organs.

If I am a donor, what kind of tests do they conduct on my body?

Once death has been declared and authorization is verified through the Donor Registry, donation professionals must conduct blood tests and other standard medical tests to determine whether or not the patient is suitable to be a donor.

How do people get added to the transplant waiting list?

The process of joining the National Organ Transplant Waiting List begins with a physician referral and an evaluation at a transplant center. The transplant center evaluates patients to determine whether they may be suitable candidates for a transplant.

Can organs be sold?

Buying and selling organs for the purpose of transplantation is illegal in the United States and most countries throughout the world.

Is my family or estate charged for donation?

There is no cost to the donor's family for organ, tissue and eye donation. Families are responsible for hospital expenses incurred by the patient before donation. Funeral expenses remain the responsibility of the donor's family.

Who pays for donated organs, tissues and eyes?

All costs associated with organ, tissue and eye recovery are assumed by the recovery organizations. These costs are then reimbursed by transplant centers that, in turn, bill private and public insurance plans.

What if my family members are opposed to donation?

Once an individual, who is an emancipated minor or is over the age of 18, has made the decision to be an organ, tissue and eye donor and has enrolled in the Wisconsin Donor Registry, that individual's decision is honored. Family members cannot override that individual's decision to donate. In the event of a loved one's sudden death, it may ease the family's pain to already know the wishes of their loved one regarding donation. For this reason we recommend that you share your wishes with your family today.

What if I change my mind and don't want to be a donor?

You may remove your name from the Wisconsin Donor Registry at any time. Go to www.YesWillWisconsin and click on the Wisconsin Donor Registry link.

Does my religion support organ, tissue and eye donation?

With very few exceptions, all major religions throughout the world support or permit donation, with most viewing it as a humanitarian act of giving.

Does donation affect funeral arrangements?

The donor's body is treated with great respect and dignity throughout the process. Recovery agencies work closely with funeral service providers to ensure that there are no untimely delays. Families can still have an open-casket funeral and/or viewing if that is their wish.

Do the donor and recipient families meet?

The identity of all parties is kept confidential. The donation agencies facilitate anonymous correspondence between donor families and recipients. Some even choose to meet each other through the donation agencies.