



# ORGAN, TISSUE AND EYE DONATION – A GIFT FOR LIFE

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 waiting continues to increase daily.

## THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES:

- More than 28,000 organ transplants, 44,600 eye transplants and 750,000 tissue transplants are performed each year in the U.S.
- More than 7,400 families donated their loved one's organs in 2007.
- In Wisconsin there are currently almost 1,500 people on the waiting list for an organ transplant.
- Every 13 minutes a new name is added to the organ transplant waiting list.
- Over 100,000 people in the U.S. are currently waiting for an organ transplant.

## 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.
- Donated bones and tissue replace those lost to cancer, trauma, joint disease, arthritis and other conditions.
- For burn victims, donor skin can make the difference between life and death.
- Heart valves give patients a chance to resume normal life.
- Transplanted corneas mean vision is restored.
- People of all ages are waiting for transplants, in fact people under the age of 49 make up almost 50 percent of the organ transplant 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, tissue and eye 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:

United Network for Organ Sharing	(800) 292-9537	<a href="http://www.unos.org">www.unos.org</a>
Donate Life America	(804) 782-4920	<a href="http://www.donatelife.net">www.donatelife.net</a>
Donate Life Wisconsin		<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, TISSUE AND EYE DONATION

Making a decision about donation comes, for many families, at a time of great stress, anxiety and sadness. By understanding the facts about 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 CAN BE TRANSPLANTED?

Organs that can be transplanted include heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, pancreas and intestine. Corneas, bone, heart valves, connective tissue and skin are among the tissues that can be transplanted.

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

Organ and tissue 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 monetary 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 donation.

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

Donation does not cause disfigurement to a patient's body. Organ and tissue recovery is done through delicate surgical procedures that can be covered by clothing. Families can still have an open-casket funeral if that is their wish.

## DO WEALTHY PEOPLE RECEIVE ORGANS, TISSUE AND EYES 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 recipients.