

ORGAN DONATION

THE ISSUE: IN 30 SECONDS

Learn more about how to Donate Life to others in need by registering as an Organ Donor. It only takes three minutes to give hope to those in need of an organ transplant.

THE ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

According to Donate Life America (www.donatelife.net), “Organ donation is the process of giving an organ or a part of an organ for the purpose of transplantation into another person.” But what exactly does this mean?

Organ or tissue donation provides a second chance at life for thousands of individuals suffering from organ disease or failure (www.organdonor.gov). Though there are a few exceptions (donors must be free of HIV, active cancer, or a systemic infection), almost anyone can become a donor – regardless of age or ethnicity. Though there is no age limit (upper or lower), if a prospective donor is under the age of 18, permission of a parent/guardian may be required.

There are some misconceptions surrounding organ donation. Many prospective donors fear that their donor status will affect their treatment if admitted to a hospital. In fact, only when all efforts to save the patient’s life, and after brain death has been declared, will organs be recovered from the donor and transplanted to a match. After determining the donor’s medical history, patients on the national transplant list will be considered to receive the organ(s).

What about those receiving organ donations? Depending on the severity of their need, and the availability of a good organ match, transplant recipients are placed on a national list. There are currently over 100,000 of individuals on the US transplant list, and the need is growing daily.

Families whose loved ones provide organs after their death are often comforted in the fact that a part of their loved one is living on and helping another person. There is no cost to the donor’s family for organ or tissue donation, and all major US religions support donation as a final act of love and generosity toward others.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I register as an organ donor?

Individuals may register by state to become organ or tissue donors, whether online or by mail through your State’s Department of Health, or when applying (or renewing) your driver’s license. Be sure to tell your family about your decision to become an organ donor, and suggest that they add themselves to the list, too!

Which organs are available for donation?

A deceased donor can give kidneys, pancreas, liver, lungs, heart, or intestinal organs. A living donar can give a kidney, or a portion of the liver, lung, intestine, or pancreas.

What else can I donate?

One tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 50 people. A few examples of tissue donation include skin, ligaments, and bone. Cornea donations can help restore sight to those who have lost it due to age or disease. Blood and bone marrow donations are also important ways which an ordinary person can improve the lives of a relative or stranger.

THE NEED

The need for organ and tissue donations is always growing – currently, nearly 120,000 men, women, and children are awaiting transplants in the United States. Making the decision to become a donor is not an easy one, but it is a great act of generosity for those who choose to do so. Education surrounding the issue may help bring more available donors to those in need!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Donate Life America: www.donatelife.net

NYS Department of Health: <http://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/patients/donation/organ/>

US Department of Health & Human Services: www.organdonor.gov

Transplant Living: <http://www.transplantliving.org/>

United Network for Organ Sharing: <http://www.unos.org/>

CONNECTIONS TO JUSTICE

Making a Choice: Organ and tissue donation is not required; individuals add their names to the registry voluntarily. A prospective donor must educate themselves about the process, and whether it is the right choice not only for themselves, but those in need. Making your organs available for donation helps to give a better life to others.

Advocating for Justice: Spending a long while suffering from organ failure can make an individual weak, and drain hope of ever returning to their former activities. As an advocate for Organ Donation, those who are healthy can spread the word about the benefits of registering as a donor, as well as dispelling misconceptions about the donation process.

Allocation of Organs: Though organ donation/allocation policies are designed to be as equitable as possible with the number of donor organs available, there is always room for improvement. The national list is organized by severity of need, time spent on list, and availability of a good match, not by financial or celebrity status. (www.transplantliving.org)