



## **Why are eye, organ and tissue donations needed?**

Each year nearly 50,000 Americans receive corneal transplants, hundreds of thousands more benefit from tissue donation such as skin for burn victims, while more than 121,000 individuals are waiting for organ transplants. The need is great and without these surgeries, people will remain disabled or die.

## **Is there a cost to donate?**

No. There is no cost to a donor or donor's estate.

## **Are there religion objections to donation?**

No. Eye, organ and tissue donation are consistent with the beliefs and attitudes of major religions and support donation.

## **Is there a delay in funeral arrangements?**

Eye/cornea recovery is performed within hours of a donor's death. The recovery is a surgical procedure, respectful of the donor. Great care is taken to preserve the donor's appearance. Desired funeral arrangements may proceed without delay or interruption.

## **Will my medical care be compromised if they know I'm a donor?**

No. Donation is only considered after all efforts to save a patient have failed and a patient has died. Saving a patient's life is the health care providers first priority.

## **Who can be a donor?**

Anyone can decide to become a donor. Medical history or age does not automatically exclude a person from being a donor. Do not rule yourself out. Suitability for donation will be determined at the time of your death by a representative from the recovery agency. You don't have to have perfect vision to be an eye donor. Cataracts or LASIK surgery doesn't prevent you from being a donor. At the time of one's death, eye bank professionals will determine donor eligibility for eye donation.

## **How do I become a donor?**

It's easy! Enroll in the NY State Donate Life Registry by clicking on this link [NYS Donate Life Registry](#)

## **What happens when I enroll in the Donate Life Registry?**

By enrolling in the Donate Life Registry, you are giving legal consent for the recovery of your organs, tissues and eyes for the purposes of transplantation and research at the time of your death. Registry information is kept strictly confidential and can only be accessed by (a) Department of Health employees when required for the performance of their official duties, (b) federally regulated organ procurement organizations, (c) New York State licensed tissue and eye banks and (d) other entities formally approved by the Commissioner. Such access can only be for the purpose of identifying potential organ and tissue donors at or near the time of death.





### **What is an eye bank?**

An eye bank obtains, medically evaluates, and distributes eye tissue donated by caring individuals for use in corneal transplantation, research, and education. Eye banks are non-profit organizations.

### **How does the eye bank ensure safe corneal tissue for transplantation?**

The donated corneas and the donor's medical history are evaluated by the eye bank in accordance with the Eye Bank Association of America's (EBAA) strict Medical Standards, the NYSDOH, and FDA. EBAA provides standards for eye banks to use in training personnel to evaluate donor eye tissue.

### **What is corneal blindness!**

Corneal blindness is a disorder that results from the cornea becoming clouded, making a person blind. This condition can result from a variety of diseases, injury or infection.

### **What is the cornea?**

The cornea is a clear tissue covering the front of the eye. It is the main focusing element of the eye. Vision will be dramatically reduced if the cornea becomes cloudy from disease, injury, or infection.

### **Will eye donation affect the appearance of the donor?**

No. Great care is taken to preserve the donor's appearance. Funeral arrangements, including a viewing if desired, may proceed as scheduled.

### **What happens if corneas are not suitable for transplant?**

The donor's medical condition and the eye tissue are carefully evaluated. Corneas determined to be unsuitable for transplant may be used for medical research and teaching.

## **Organs that Can be Donated**

### **Corneas/Whole Eyes**

Corneas help restore sight to those suffering from corneal blindness due to disease, injury or infection. Sclera, the white part of the eye, can be used as a patch if one's own sclera has been penetrated or in the treatment of glaucoma.

### **Skin**

Donated skin helps burn victims. The donated skin is placed over the wound area keeping it protected from infection.

### **Bone**

Bone is used in certain dental procedures, spinal disc surgeries and bone grafting for limb preservation.

### **Heart Valves**

Heart valves are used to replace those that are damaged.

### **Tendons/Ligaments**

The use of tendons and ligaments in surgical procedures, such as repairs to a damaged ACL, avoids the need to have one's own tissue recovered and used.

### **Blood Vessels**

Blood vessels are provided for cardiac bypass surgeries.