



FROM COUNSEL

A Preventive Law Service of The Office of The Judge Advocate General
Keeping You Informed On Personal Legal Affairs

Organ and Tissue Donation

Here are some Questions & Answers (Q&A) on Organ and Tissue Donation.

Q: Am I qualified to be a donor?

A. Everyone may consider themselves a potential organ/tissue donor, regardless of age or medical history. At the time of the donation, professional transplant surgeons will determine which organs and tissue are acceptable.

Q: If I indicate a willingness to become a donor, will every effort be made to save my life in case of accident or illness?

A. Yes. Organ and tissue donation is considered only after all possible efforts have been made to save the patient's life. The patient's death must be certified under very strict medical guidelines. Members of the transplant team cannot be involved in certifying the patient's death.

Q: Can I specify which organs/tissue I want to donate?

A. Yes. You can specify donating one, some, or all of your organs and tissue.

Q: Should I discuss my decision with my family?

A. Yes. Even if you have signed a donor card, hospital personnel will ask your family for permission before you may become an organ/tissue donor. Your family will be more likely to give permission and to be less concerned about the donation if you have told them of your decision to donate.

Q: What will my family think about my becoming a donor?

A. Most families feel very positive about the decision. It will spare them the burden of making the decision for you. Families typically experience a sense of comfort in knowing their loved one's gift gave another person a second chance at life.

Q: Will my family have to pay the costs of donation?

A. All costs related to recovery of organs and tissue are paid by the organ/tissue procurement agency making the arrangements. The donor's family pays only normal funeral expenses and hospital expenses incurred before donation.

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Q: How do I become a donor?

A. You can indicate your intent to become an organ/tissue donor on your driver's license or on a signed donor card, but these methods do not guarantee you will become a donor. The best thing you can do is to tell your family, because after your death they will be asked for permission to donate. If they know your wishes now, they will be better prepared to honor your request.

You can also register with a private organization such as The Living Bank (<http://www.livingbank.org/>). The Living Bank is a non-profit organization that provides free advice to donors and their families about organ/tissue donation. You can learn much more about donation and register as a donor through their site.

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