



## Organ / Tissue Donation Fact Sheet

### By the Numbers

- 25 lives can be saved or enhanced by one donor.
- 4,700 people in Illinois are waiting for an organ transplant.
- 100,000 people are on the national organ transplant waiting list.
- 28,000 lifesaving organ transplants are performed each year.
- 1 in 20 people will need some type of medical transplant during a lifetime.
- 1 million tissue transplants are performed each year.
- 18 people die each day waiting for an organ transplant.
- 300 people in Illinois die each year waiting for an organ transplant and
- 7,000 people across the United States die each year waiting.
- Every 11 minutes a new name is added to the national transplant waiting list.
  
- The amount of time each organs/tissue remain viable outside the body:
  - 4 hours: Hearts and lungs
  - 12-18 hours: Livers, small intestine and pancreas
  - 36-72 hours: Kidneys
  - 5 years: Tissue
  - 14 days: Corneas (although they are normally transplanted within 3-4 days)

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What organs and tissues are needed most?**

Corneas and kidneys are needed most in terms of the number of people waiting. In terms of lifesaving ability, hearts, lungs and livers are needed the most.

#### **Can you buy or sell organs and tissue in the United States?**

It is illegal to buy or sell organs and tissue in the U.S. Federal law mandates that neither donors nor their heirs may receive payment for donating organs and tissue.

#### **Is there a Black Market in the U.S. for organ/tissue donation?**

There are many stories about a Black Market for organ/tissue donation. While the possibility exists, it is illegal to buy or sell organs and tissue in the U.S., and federal law mandates that neither donors nor their heirs may receive payment for donating organs and tissue.

#### **Because I have some health issues, I cannot be an organ donor, so why should I sign up?**

Organ and tissue donors typically are healthy people who have suffered a life-ending trauma and are declared dead. But virtually anyone—regardless of age, race, gender and even many health conditions—can become an organ and/or tissue donor.

**Does my religion support organ and tissue donation?**

All major religions support donation as a charitable act of giving. Most religious groups support donation as the highest gesture of humanitarianism.

**I signed the back of my license – that makes me an organ and tissue donor, right?**

No. Signing the back of your license or state identification card is no longer a way to indicate your wish to be an organ/tissue donor. If you registered before January 1, 2006, you must re-register at [www.DonateLifeIllinois.org](http://www.DonateLifeIllinois.org) or at your local drivers facility to ensure your decision to be a donor is honored.

**Can I have an open-casket wake if I am a donor?**

Organs and tissues are recovered in a dignified surgical procedure, and the body is carefully restored. Donation does **not** interfere with customary funeral arrangements.

**Will my family have to pay if I am an organ donor?**

There is no cost to the donor's family or estate for the donation of organs or tissue. Costs associated with the recovery of organs and tissue, laboratory testing and other donation services are covered by the recipients and/or their medical insurance companies.

**Does the donor family ever meet the recipient?**

Donor families are given some general information about (age, sex, geographic location) of the recipient of their loved one's organs. If both the donor family and the recipient agree, they may exchange names, correspond and even meet. This process is coordinated through the organ procurement organization.

**Can organs be given to people in different racial and ethnic groups?**

Yes. Compatible blood types and organ size are critical to matching donor organs and recipients.