

Organ Donation



Talk about it!

**Answers
to your
questions**

New  Nouveau
Brunswick
C A N A D A

Many people in New Brunswick are waiting to hear that organs have been found which could restore them to full and active lives. Many others are waiting for a tissue transplant. There is a critical shortage of organs and tissues for transplant, so most of these people can only wait and hope.

Organ and tissue transplants are no longer experimental. Medical and drug research, and advances in surgical techniques, have brought us to the point where transplantation is a common practice.

How can I be a donor?

If you would like to be an organ and tissue donor, it is important to make a commitment. Tell those closest to you about your decision. You can request a donor card or you call SNB at 1-888-762-8600 from anywhere in New Brunswick or 506-684-7901 from outside New Brunswick or if calling from Dalhousie to have your wishes recorded by Medicare. The purpose of this brochure is to answer some questions about organ donation.

Who can be a donor?

Anyone can donate his or her organs and tissues. The medical suitability of the organs and tissues is determined by trained health professionals *after* a donor's death.

Can a person be too old to donate?

Although there are age restrictions for certain organs and tissues, you should not let age stand in the way of your commitment to be a donor.

Will everything be done to save my life?

Yes. Medical personnel always do everything possible to save the life of a patient. Organ donation is not considered until neurological death has been declared by two physicians who are not involved with the Transplant Program. There are rigorous criteria for determining neurological death.

What is neurological death?

Death and neurological death are the same: the irreversible cessation of all brain functions. Once neurological death occurs, it is only a matter of time before the heart and other vital organs stop functioning.

Can my next of kin make a decision for me?

Under the Human Tissue Gift Act (April 2005) all people who die in hospital are to be considered as potential organ and/or tissue donors. In cases where your wishes have not been recorded your family will be asked to consent to donation.

Can my next of kin withhold permission even if my organ donor card is signed?

Under the Human Tissue gift Act the person entitled to consent will be approached by a health professional when death has occurred or is imminent for donation and will be discouraged from overriding your wishes if known.

What happens to my body after the organs and tissues have been removed?

Organ and tissue retrieval is a careful surgical procedure that leaves no visible disfigurement. After the organs and tissues have been removed, the body is returned to the family for funeral arrangements.

Will my donation remain confidential?

The NB Organ and Tissue Procurement Program mandate ensures complete confidentiality for the donor. Unless the family releases the information, or it is legally required, only the immediate family need know about the donation.

Can children be donors?

Parents or guardians can give consent for organ and tissue donation by children.

What is the view of religious groups on organ and tissue donation?

Most religious groups support the concept on the basis that organ and tissue donation is a life giving or life enhancing gift to another individual.

How successful are transplants?

There have been tremendous advances in recent years. Most transplant recipients return to useful and productive lives.

If I donate my whole body to a medical school, can I still be an organ and tissue donor?

No. In this case, only the eyes can be used for transplantation purposes.

Organs and tissues most frequently needed

Eyes: Eyes are desperately needed to restore sight for people with corneal disease or injury. The procedure has a 95% success rate.

Hearts: Many people of all ages suffer from certain serious heart disorders. For them, heart transplants are the only hope of survival. For others quality of life can be greatly improved with implantation of a heart valve.

Kidneys: People who suffer kidney failure can be kept alive with dialysis. But dialysis cannot completely replace kidney function, and the patient's diet and lifestyle are severely restricted. Kidney transplantation allows recipients to lead full and healthy lives and, in most cases, is successful.

Liver: Certain irreversible liver conditions mean death for the patient but liver transplantation gives new hope. Although the procedure is delicate, statistics indicate it is successful.

Lungs: Lung transplants are carried out when a patient has severe life-threatening respiratory problems. Sometimes a lung and a heart transplant are performed at the same time.

Pancreas: Pancreas transplants, sometimes done at the same time as a kidney transplant offer diabetics a life without the requirement for insulin injections

Bones and joints: It is possible to save the limbs of people threatened with cancerous bone tumors or who have suffered severe injuries due to trauma. If an early diagnosis is made, transplantation can be an alternative to amputation in some cases. In addition, some cases of injured and arthritic knees and hips can be reconstructed, preventing the individuals from becoming crippled.

Skin: Donated skin can be used as a temporary dressing for severe burn victims until it is possible to do skin grafting using the patient's own skin. Skin can also be used to treat severe ulcers caused by conditions such as diabetes.

If you have further questions about organ and tissue donation, or would like extra organ donor cards, contact your family physician, the New Brunswick Organ & Tissue Procurement Program by calling (506) 643-6848 or by writing to the

Organ and Tissue Procurement Program
Dept. of Health and Wellness
Hospital Services Branch
P. O. Box 5100
Fredericton, N. B.
E3B 5G8

Or by contacting the NB Eye Bank
130 Bayard Drive
Saint John, NB E2L 3L6
Phone (506) 632-5541.