

Myths and Misconceptions about Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplant Debunked!

Myth: Under the deemed consent law, if I don't tell my family my last wishes my organs and tissues will be taken when I die.

Fact: A substitute decision maker may consent for donation if an individual does not have family. It is important to discuss with friends and family your last known decision.

Myth: My family will be charged if I donate my organs or tissues.

Fact: There are no additional charges to the family for the purposes of donation, and there is no exchange of money or gifts.

Myth: A history of medical illness will prevent me from becoming an organ or tissue donor.

Fact: Very few medical conditions automatically disqualify you from donating organs and tissues. Each potential donor is evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure the safety of transplant. Even with a history of disease, certain organs and tissues may be healthy and a match for transplant. For instance, those who have undergone cancer treatment may still be able to donate their eyes.

Myth: Organ and tissue donation is against my religion.

Fact: Many religions not only support organ and tissue donation as an individual right, but encourage it as an act of generosity and compassion. This includes Roman Catholicism, Islam, most branches of Judaism and most Protestant faiths.

Myth: An open-casket funeral isn't an option for people who have donated organs or tissue.

Fact: Organ and tissue donation doesn't interfere with having an open-casket funeral. Surgery to recover tissues is done shortly after someone has died. It is done with the utmost respect and dignity. Funeral arrangements can then go ahead as you and your family wish, including an open casket.

Myth: I can't change my mind after I have made the decision to donate.

Fact: You can change your mind at any time. This is a very personal decision for you and your family. It has to be the right choice for you.

Myth: My family will never know what happens to my donated organs and tissues.

Fact: For donations and transplants that take place in Nova Scotia after January 18, 2021, the donor and the recipient may be eligible to have contact. Both the donor and the recipient must be willing to have contact and both of you must meet certain criteria. Following a tissue donation, a letter is sent to the substitute decision maker/family to indicate the tissues recovered or transplanted.

Myth: Donation will delay funeral arrangements.

Fact: The body is released to the family or funeral home as soon as organs and tissues are recovered (usually within 24hours). Every effort is made to avoid any delay in making funeral arrangements.

Myth: If I'm in an accident and the hospital knows that I'm designated as a donor, the doctors and staff won't try to save my life.

Fact: It is only the organ and tissue donation team who can access registered decisions. They are contacted when the health care team is concerned you may not survive your injury or illness.

Myth: I can't be a donor because I am too old.

Fact: People of all ages can register to be organ and tissue donors. At the time of death a member of the health care team will assess if organs and tissues are able to be donated.

Myth: If I choose to donate my organs and tissues then the "remainder" automatically gets donated for science.

Fact: Requests for education and research for organs and tissues not suitable for transplant must be consented to by the substitute decision maker. It is a separate process that requires express consent. Deemed consent does not apply to research or education.

Any further questions on deceased organ and tissue donation can be directed to:

Legacy of Life legacyoflife@nshealth.ca or toll free at 1-877-841-3929

Regional Tissue Bank at 902-473-4171 or toll free at 1-800-314-6515

Any further questions on live organ donation can be directed to:

Multi-Organ Transplant Program of Atlantic Canada (MOTP) at 902-473-6193

Record your decision by going to:

novascotia.ca/organ-and-tissue-donation or by calling 902-496-7008

