

Organ Donation Myths and Facts

Sometimes, myths and misperceptions about organ, eye, and tissue donation can prevent someone from signing up. Imagine the lives we could save if everyone knew the true facts about donation!

You can help bust the myths about organ donation—and help save lives—by learning and sharing these facts.

Myth

I have a medical condition, so I can't be a donor.

Fact

Anyone, regardless of age or medical history, can sign up to be a donor.

The transplant team will determine at an individual's time of death whether donation is possible.

There are very few conditions that would prevent a person from becoming a donor, such as HIV infection, active cancer, or a systemic infection. You should still consider registering. Even with an illness, you may be able to donate your organs or tissues.

Myth

I'm too old to be a donor.

Fact

There's no age limit to organ donation.

To date, the oldest donor in the U.S. was age 93. What matters is the health and condition of your organs when you die.

Myth

I don't think my religion supports donation.

Fact

Most major religions in the United States support organ donation and consider donation as the final act of love and generosity toward others.

Myth

If they see I'm a donor at the hospital, they won't try to save my life.

Fact

When you are sick or injured and admitted to a hospital, the one and only priority is to save your life.

Period. Donation doesn't become a possibility until all lifesaving methods have failed.

Myth

Rich or famous people on the waiting list get organs faster.

Fact

A national computer system matches donated organs to recipients.

The factors used in matching include blood type, time spent waiting, other important medical information, how sick the person is, and geographic location. Race, income, and celebrity are NEVER considered.

Myth

My family won't be able to have an open casket funeral if I'm a donor.

Fact

An open casket funeral is usually possible for organ, eye, and tissue donors.

Through the entire donation process, the body is treated with care, respect, and dignity.

Myth

My family will have to pay for the donation.

Fact

There is no cost to donors or their families for organ or tissue donation.

Myth

Somebody could take my organs and sell them.

Fact

Federal law prohibits buying and selling organs in the U.S.

Violators can be punished with prison sentences and fines.

Myth

If I'm in a coma, they could take my organs.

Fact

The majority of deceased organ donors are patients who have been declared brain dead.

But brain death is NOT the same as coma. People can recover from comas, but not from brain death. Brain death is final.

Myth

People in the LGBT community can't donate.

Fact

There is no policy or federal regulation that excludes a member of the LGBT community from donating organs.

What matters in donating organs is the health of the organs.