

## *Inspire Hope: Become an Organ Donor*

Saving many lives sometimes takes just one miracle. For those waiting for organ transplants, that miracle starts with hope. Organ and tissue donation inspires hope for a second chance at life for thousands each year. One organ donor can save up to eight lives; one tissue donation can improve up to 50 lives.

The need for organ donors is growing. Over 123,000 people are now awaiting organ transplants in the US alone. Every 10 minutes another person is added to that list.

February 14th is National Donor Day and focuses on organ, tissue, marrow, platelet and blood donation. Many people consider organ donation the ultimate gift of love and compassion.

### *What is Organ Donation?*

Organ donation after death may include the eyes, heart, liver, kidneys, lungs, pancreas or intestinal organs. Tissue donation is possible from bone, skin, heart valves and tendons. A living donor can give a kidney or a portion of their liver, lung, intestine or pancreas.

Last year organ donors made over 28,000 transplants possible. Another one million people received cornea and tissue transplants that enabled their recovery from trauma, bone damage, spinal injuries, burns, hearing impairment and vision loss.

### *Why Donate?*

For recipients, a transplant means life or improved quality of life. It may mean the gift of vision or hearing, or independence from costly treatments to survive and a return to a normal, pain-free lifestyle. Grieving families of deceased donors are often comforted that their loss will help save or improve another's life. Most major religions endorse organ donation as the highest gesture of humanitarianism.

### *Who Can Donate?*

Anyone can be a potential organ donor. Successful donors range from newborns to senior citizens. Organ condition is most important. Those with illnesses may still become donors. Doctors determine whether organs are viable for donation at the appropriate time. Donors under 18 may need permission from a parent or guardian to donate.

### *Donation Process*

Every state has a donor registry. The most important step is to sign up as an organ donor in your state's registry. You can also identify your intentions on your driver's license, tell your family and healthcare providers and state your wishes in an Organ Donor form or in your Advance Healthcare Directive (AHD) or living will.

Organ donation occurs under the same sterile conditions as any medical procedure. No donor or their family ever incurs costs. Donation never disfigures a donor or interferes with funeral arrangements.

### *Matching Criteria*

A computerized matching system considers important medical information including blood type, waiting time and location when matching donors to recipients. A recipient's financial status is not a factor. The success rate for organ donation is between 80-90 percent. Donor-recipient anonymity is maintained although information and letters of gratitude are often exchanged.

### *Learn More*

Visit [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov) or [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net) for more information on how you can save and improve lives by becoming an organ donor.