Educator Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can register as a donor?

A. Everyone is eligible to join the registry, regardless of medical history or health habits. Individuals can make a legal decision to register as a donor once they are 16, but parents/guardians of minors under 18 years of age are consulted before donation can occur.

Q. How do I register as a donor?

A. You can register as a donor at a North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (NC DMV) Driver License office OR you may register online with Donate Life NC at **DonateLifeNC.org/register**.

- If you register via the DMV, a red heart will be placed on your driver's license or ID card. This symbol means that you are giving legal consent for the donation of your organs and corneas/eyes after you die. It does not include tissue donation, nor does it include whole body donation.
- If you register online, you can be more specific about your donation wishes. For example, you can choose which organs or tissues you want to donate and exclude those you do not want to donate. You can also register your decision about the disposition of your organs/tissues/eyes in case they cannot be used for transplant.
- If you have a heart on your driver's license and you also register as a donor online, your online record supersedes your DMV record because it is the more specific donation document.
- Once you register online or via the DMV, you donor record becomes part of the NC
 Donor Registry, a confidential database that is accessed by donation professionals at the
 appropriate time. Through the North Carolina Heart Prevails Law (Session Law 2007538), if you have registered your decision to be a donor your wishes cannot be
 overturned by others. It relieves the family of making this decision on your behalf, so
 please be sure to tell them when you join the registry.
- In addition, one of the most important things you can do is make sure your family knows
 your wishes regarding donation. Whether you wish to be a donor or not it is
 important to share your decision with your family

Q. What does the red heart on my license mean?

A. Donors leave an incredible legacy — there are many, many North Carolinians who are alive today because someone like you said "yes" at a NCDMV driver license office. We want everyone to understand what that "yes" means.

When you say "yes" to donation at the DMV, a red heart is added to your license. This heart is legally binding consent to be an organ and eye donor. Deciding to be an organ and eye donor at the DMV means that you have chosen to make all of your organs available for transplant at the time of your death. It does NOT mean that you agree to whole body donation. If an organ cannot be used for transplantation or therapy then it may be used for medical research and education, unless you specify otherwise. The donor's body is then available for whatever funeral and burial arrangements the family wishes to make, including an open casket funeral if they so desire.

You can create a separate, online registration at DonateLifeNC.org/registry that will allow you to specify your donation options through this website. This registry allows you to decide which organs and tissues you want to donate — and which ones you do not wish to donate. You can also decide what you want to happen if the organs, tissues and eyes cannot be used for transplant. Since an online registration is more specific, it will supersede a person's DMV registration.

Once you register online or via the DMV, your donor record becomes part of the NC Donor Registry, a confidential database that is accessed by donation professionals at the appropriate time.

We encourage all individuals to tell their families about their decision to give life through donation.

Q. What if I change my mind — how can I change my donor record?

A. If your donor registration (red heart) is on your NC driver's license or ID card, you can create an online donor record at DonateLifeNC.org/register that will supersede your DMV donor record. Go to the Update Your Donor Profile page and log in by entering your driver's license number and birthdate (make sure you have selected: "Update My DMV Profile"). Once you log in, you can update your donor record however you wish. Because this online donor record is more detailed, it supersedes your DMV donor record.

If you wish to remove yourself from the NC Donor Registry, log in as noted above and then scroll to the very bottom of the page. You will see a box that you can check that says "Remove me from the donor registry." Click that box to remove your name from the online donor registry, then click Submit.

However, because we have read-only access to DMV data, it will not change the donor designation on your driver's license. The next time you renew your driver's license, please tell the examiner that you would like the donor designation removed from your license, so your

online donor record and your DMV donor record will match. In the meantime, your online donor record is the one that will be followed since it is the most detailed record.

If you registered via our website, visit the Update Your Donor Profile page in the Donor Registry section of the site. Make sure you have "Update my Online Profile" selected. Enter your username or email address and your password. If you do not know your password, click the "I forgot my account information" link below.

Once you are logged in, scroll to the bottom of the registration form and check the box to be removed from the registry.

Questions About Organ and Tissue Donation

Q. What organs and tissues can be donated and how are they used?

A. Organs that can be donated include the heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys, and small intestines. Organs are used to save lives by replacing diseased organs with healthy ones. Tissues that can be donated include skin, bone, corneas, heart valves, and veins. Corneas are transplanted to give sight and heart valves are used in valve replacement surgery, common in children. Skin grafts are used for burn victims. Bone, tendons and ligaments can be used in reconstructive surgeries.

The recovery process is only initiated with the hopes that transplantation will be possible. If it is determined that a particular organ or tissue is not suitable for transplant, then it may be used for medical research and education, unless you have specified otherwise. The online registration allows you to specify whether organs and tissues may be used for which organs and/or tissues you wish to donate or to determine if they should be appropriately discarded.

Q. Who can be a donor?

A. Just about everyone is eligible to donate, regardless of age, medical history or health habits. Newborns as well as senior citizens have been organ donors. Organs must have a continuous blood and oxygen supply to be suitable for transplantation, so typically only individuals who have died in a hospital intensive care unit, have the potential to be organ donors. However, tissue and eye donation can occur when someone dies at home. Medical suitability for donation is determined at the time of death, with medical professionals making sure that organs and tissues are safe for transplant. Advances in medicine continue to allow more people to be donors, so we encourage anyone who is willing to donate join the registry.



Q. How does the process work?

A. By law, hospitals have to notify Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) and/or Tissue/Eye Banks of death or imminent death. If organ or tissue donation is a possibility, recovery agency personnel check the NC Donor Registry to see if the person had designated his/her wishes. Recovery agency representatives will meet/talk with the family to discuss their loved ones wishes, take a medical history, and arrange for tests determining if the person can be a donor.

Q. How soon to organs and tissues need to be transplanted after recovery?

•	Heart and lungs	4 hours - 6 hours
•	Pancreas	12 hours - 24 hours
•	Liver	18 hours - 24 hours
•	Kidneys	48 hours - 72 hours
•	Bone/Skin	Two years - five years

• Corneas Can be preserved 7 – 14 days

Q. Is there any cost to my family if I am an organ/tissue donor?

A. No. The donor's family does not pay for the cost of organ or tissue donation. All costs related to donation of organs and tissues are paid by the recipient, usually through insurance, Medicare or Medicaid. Medical costs for care given prior to a person's death — and funeral expenses — remain the responsibility of the family.

Q. Does my religion support organ and tissue donation?

A. All major organized religions approve of organ and tissue donation and consider it an act of charity and an individual decision. Some religions have taken a proactive stance with a resolution or adopted a position that encourages people to seriously consider donation and plan accordingly.

Q. Will signing up on the donor registry affect the quality of medical care I receive?

A. Absolutely not. Medical care is always based on what is necessary to save a patient's life. If you are sick or injured, the emergency medical personnel, doctors and nurses only job is to care for you and save your life.

Q. How do they match donors and recipients for organ transplants?



A. Patients are matched to organs based on a number of factors including blood and tissue typing, organ size, medical urgency, time on the waiting list, and geographical location. The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) coordinates the nation's transplant system, under contract with the federal government. Factors such as race, gender, age, income, or celebrity status are never considered when determining who receives an organ.

Q. Are there any racial barriers to donation and matching organs?

A. No. Race is not a barrier, nor is it a criterion for organ matching. A computer database matches organ donors with potential recipients according to medical suitability. However, patients waiting for kidney transplants are more likely to have an antigen match with a donor of the same race. Therefore, African-Americans will "match" better with a kidney donated from an African-American than any other race — as will Asians with Asians, etc.

Q. Can I sell my organs for money?

A. No. The National Organ Transplant Act (Public Law 98-507) makes it illegal to sell human organs and tissues in the United States. Violators are subject to fines and imprisonment.

Q. If I have a medical condition like diabetes, heart disease or another health concern, can I still donate?

A. We recommend that all individuals consider themselves potential organ and tissue donors. Transplant professionals will evaluate potential donors and determine suitability for donation of particular organs or tissue when the time for donation arises. Regardless of any pre-existing medical circumstances or conditions, determination of suitability to donate organs or tissue is based on a combination of factors that take into account the donor's general health. This determination is done by the medical staff that recovers the organs or by the transplant team that reviews all of the data about the organ(s) or tissue(s) that have been recovered from the donor.

Q. Can I be a donor if I have or have had cancer?

A. People who have or have had some forms of cancer can be eye donors. They could be an organ and tissue donor if they have been cancer-free for at least five years. Advances in medicine continue to allow more people to be donors, so we encourage everyone to register.

Q. Can my organs be transplanted if I die at home?

A. Unfortunately, no. Organs must have a continuous blood and oxygen supply to be suitable for transplantation. Typically, only individuals who have been determined brain dead in

a hospital intensive care unit, have the potential to be organ donors. However, tissue and eye donation can occur when someone dies at home.

Q. What does "brain death" mean?

A. Brain death is the complete and irreversible loss of all brain function. It means there is no blood flow through the brain or brain stem and the patient has stopped responding to outside stimuli. When a person is declared brain dead, they are clinically and legally dead. Brain death is not the same as being in a coma, since coma patients still have brain function and respond to stimuli. Extensive testing is done to determine brain death and a brain death declaration is made by a physician who is not involved in donation or transplantation.

Q. What is Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD)?

A. Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD) is organ donation from a patient who dies from cardiac arrest rather than being determined to be brain dead. A DCD donor is a patient who is on a ventilator but does not meet brain death criteria. The patient is ventilator dependent to live. Donation options are presented to the family after the family decides to discontinue ventilator support. Once the heart has stopped beating and the patient is no longer breathing, the patient is declared dead by a medical professional not affiliated with organ transplantation. The organ donation process takes place soon after death is declared. If cardiac arrest doesn't happen in a certain amount of time, donation doesn't take place.

DCD donation increases the number of organs available for transplant and is a source of donation that can help to alleviate the shortage of organs. It also allows more people who wish to donate, the ability to do so. DCD donors most often donate kidneys and, in less common circumstances, liver, pancreas, lungs and heart.

Q. If I am a donor, will there be a delay in funeral services?

A. In most cases, no. Usually, the procedure can be completed and the body released to the funeral home the next day.

Q. If I am a donor, can there still be an open casket funeral?

A. Yes. Organs and tissues are recovered in a surgical procedure where an incision is made, closed, and dressed. Donation does not change the appearance of the body at a funeral service. Open casket visitation, burial and cremation are all possible.



Q. Does an organ donor's family get to meet the recipient?

A. A donor's family will be told the age, sex, state and other general characteristics of recipients. If both the donor family and the recipient agree to release information to one another, they may exchange names, correspond and even meet. This process is coordinated through the organ procurement organization.

Q. How many people are waiting for organs in our country?

A. The number of people requiring a life-saving transplant continues to rise faster than the number of available donors. As of 2014, there were over 120,000 people waiting for a transplant in the U.S. Approximately 4,300 transplant candidates are added to the waiting list each month. For the most current number of patients on the waiting list and other data, visit the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network's website at http://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/.

Q. How many people are waiting for transplants in NC?

- A. Almost 3,300 North Carolinians need life-saving organ transplants.
- Q. How many people can be helped by tissue donation?
- A. More than 50 people can be helped through one tissue donor.
- Q. How many lives can be saved by one organ donor?
- A. One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people.
- Q. Can someone who is an organ transplant recipient also be a donor?
- A. Yes, someone who has received an organ donation can also be an organ and/or tissue donor.

Q. If I can't donate blood, can I donate organs?

A. If you have been ruled out from being a blood donor, you can still give the gift of life through organ donation! The same restrictions do not apply to organ donation, so we encourage you to register at DonateLifeNC.org/register. Don't rule yourself out!

Questions About Other Types of Donation

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Q. How do I donate my whole body for medical study/research?

A. The Donate Life NC registry does not include whole body donation, as being an organ and/or tissue donor usually prevents whole body donation. In some instances, medical schools

will accept eye-only donors, but each program has different requirements. If an individual wishes to make a gift of their whole body to a body donation program in North Carolina, they should make advance arrangements with a specific medical school or research program.

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- UNC School of Medicine Body Donation Information
- Duke University School of Medicine Anatomical Gifts Program
- East Carolina University: Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology of the Brody School of Medicine
- Wake Forest University: The donation of bodies for medical education, or Anatomical Bequeathal Program, is administered by the Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy.
 For more information, please call (336) 716-4369.
- Fayetteville Technical Community College Mortuary Science Program

Q. Can I still be an organ donor and also donate my body to science?

A. If you are an organ or tissue donor, most medical schools will not accept your remains for teaching purposes. However, if you are an eye donor, you may be able to donate the rest of your body to a medical school. In addition, some research institutions may accept your body for research after organ and tissue donation.

If you wish to make a gift of your whole body to a body donation program in North Carolina, you should make advance arrangements with a specific medical school program or research program.

Q. How can I donate bone marrow or blood?

A. While Donate Life NC is not directly involved with blood or bone marrow donation, we encourage you to consider these life-saving types of donation. To learn more about bone marrow donation, visit the National Marrow Donor Program website, a website which includes answers to frequently asked questions, myths, how to register and more. If you can't find what you're seeking online, you may want to contact one of the NC marrow donor offices including: Charlotte 704-921-3570, Raleigh 919-414-8312.

You can also make saving lives a habit by regularly donating blood. Appointments to give blood can be coordinated through your local blood bank. To locate a blood bank near you, visit the AABB website or by contacting the Red Cross to learn about blood drives in your area.



Q. What is living organ donation?

A. In 1954, the first living organ donation/transplant was done when a kidney was transplanted from a healthy 23-year-old identical twin to his brother, who had chronic kidney failure. Since then, medical science has advanced to the point where living donors can provide a kidney, lobe of a lung, portion of the liver, pancreas, or intestine to a recipient. Living donation is happening more often because of the shortage of organs for transplant. Relatives, loved ones, friends and even individuals with no prior relationship are serving as living donors for the growing number of people on the national organ transplant waiting list.

For more information about living donation, visit UNOS's Transplant Living website or contact your local transplant center.

- Carolinas Medical Center (Charlotte)
- Duke University Medical Center (Durham)
- UNC Health Care (Chapel Hill)
- Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center (Winston-Salem)
- Vidant Health (Greenville)

Q. Is the NC Donor Registry associated with living donation?

A. No. The NC Donor Registry is for deceased donation only. If a person wishes to donate an organ to someone in need while alive, they would make arrangements at the recipients' transplant center. For more information about living donation, visit UNOS's Transplant Living website or contact your local transplant center.

Q: How can I become a living organ donor?

A. Giving the gift of life to another person is one of the most meaningful things a person can do. Today, more than 6,000 living donors per year give the gift of life to another person, and one in four of these living donors aren't biologically related to the recipient. A living donor can save and/or greatly improve the quality of life of a transplant candidate. However, you should only make a decision about donating an organ after you are fully informed of the possible risks and benefits. For more information about living donation, visit UNOS's Transplant Living website or contact your local transplant center.

