



Tissue Donation

Information for health care professionals



What is tissue donation?

Tissue donation is the process where specific tissues are removed from the body of a deceased person and transplanted to recipients to improve their quality of life. In some cases, (e.g. heart valves), tissues can actually save the recipient's life.

In Western Australia, tissues that can be donated include:

- eyes – corneas and sclera
- bone, tendons and ligaments
- heart valves.

Tissue banks are governed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which regulates procurement, storage and testing of the tissue prior to transplantation. The tissue banks have guidelines for donation which may exclude some people, for safety reasons.

WA Tissue Donors



Luke (22 years)
Bone, eye and heart
valve donor

Grace (11 months)
Heart valve donor

Trevor (61 years)
Eye donor

Referral process

Donor coordinators, who work for DonateLife (WA organ and tissue donation agency), are notified of all deaths in public and some private hospitals, and those under coronial jurisdiction. If the death is under coronial investigation, the donor coordinator must obtain consent for donation from a coronial representative.

To assist with screening and prior to any conversation with a family, the donor coordinator may contact health professionals involved in caring for the deceased and request information. This will include cause of death, circumstances around the death, past medical history and whether coronial jurisdiction applies.

As DonateLife is an agency for the Department of Health, donor coordinators are permitted access to this information and routinely review medical notes and laboratory results.

To confirm the donor coordinator's identity, please page the on-call donor coordinator via the switchboard at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital: 08 9346 3333.

Consent process

The donor coordinator is the only authorised person who can access the Australian Organ Donor Register (AODR), in order to determine if the deceased has recorded wishes in relation to tissue donation.

Families are asked to complete a medical and social history questionnaire with the donor coordinator. At this time families are encouraged to ask questions and the donation process is explained. Every family is supported and respected whether they decide to proceed with donation or not.

After family consent and before retrieval it is a legal requirement that the hospital's designated or delegated officer authorises the removal of the tissue.

Retrieval process

It is not necessary for a potential tissue donor to have died in hospital. It is, however, important that the donation takes place as soon as possible after death.

Time constraints have been set in place by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The deceased must be admitted to a mortuary within 12 hours of death, and tissue retrieved within the specified time:

- Corneas – within 12–24 hours
- Long bones and associated tissue – within 24 hours
- Heart valves – within 24 hours
- All tissue retrievals occur prior to any post-mortem examination.

Following donation, the donor's appearance is restored with the use of prosthetic implants. There is no impact on the family's funeral plans.

After retrieval, the tissue is processed by the relevant tissue bank. Corneas are implanted within one month, whereas heart valves, bones and tendons may be stored for up to five years, awaiting transplant.

Donor family support

All families of tissue donors receive comprehensive follow-up care, which includes information regarding the outcomes of the donation. DonateLife has a donor family support coordinator, who offers confidential counselling options related to grief and bereavement. Family members are given a commemorative lapel pin specially designed for the families of organ and tissue donors, in recognition of their family member's donation. They are also invited to an annual remembrance ceremony.

There is also support and communication with the organ and tissue donation agency for as long as the donor family feels appropriate.

Further information

DonateLife

Suite 3/311 Wellington St Perth, WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 9222 0222

After hours: (08) 9346 3333

Email: donatelif@health.wa.gov.au

Web: www.donatelif.gov.au

Lions Eye Bank WA

1st Floor, Lions Eye Institute

2 Verdun Street, Nedlands, WA 6009

Telephone: (08) 9381 0777

Web: www.lei.org.au

PlusLife

Perth Orthopaedic Clinic

PO Box 1125, Nedlands, WA 6909

Telephone: (08) 9386 9300

Web: www.perthbonebank.com

Cell and Tissue Therapies WA

Royal Perth Hospital Heart Valve Bank

Cell and Tissue Therapies WA

Royal Perth Hospital

Wellington Street, Perth, WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 9224 3124

Links

Biotherapeutics Association of Australasia (Inc)

www.bioaa.org.au

Eye Bank Association of Australia & New Zealand

www.ebaanz.org

Department of Human Services

www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

National Health and Medical Research Council

www.nhmrc.gov.au

State Law Publisher, Department of Premier and Cabinet

www.slp.wa.gov.au

Therapeutic Goods Administration

<http://www.tga.gov.au/>

For any questions on tissue donation in general or regarding a specific patient, please ring Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital switchboard on 9346 3333 and ask for the on-call donor coordinator. Coordinators are available 24 hours, seven days a week.



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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