

Frequently asked questions

Can we choose which tissue to donate?

Yes. Only those tissues you have given permission for will be donated.

Can anyone become a tissue donor?

Almost anyone can be considered as a tissue donor. There are some rare exemptions.

To ensure that all donated tissues are safe, the donor's medical and lifestyle history is assessed, similar to blood donors, to protect the person receiving the tissue from infection.

How long after death can tissue be donated?

Tissue is normally donated within 24 hours after a patient has died. However, sometimes it is possible to donate up to 48 hours after death.

Throughout the donation the donor is treated with respect and dignity. You may see your relative after they have donated before they are laid to rest, if you wish.

Will tissue donation interfere with funeral arrangements?

Donation will not delay any funeral arrangements.

After donation will we receive any information?

Yes, with permission, an NHS Blood and Transplant team member will write a thank you letter, which will detail how you can access further information if you would like to receive it.

Further information

If you do not want to be contacted by one of our specialist nurses to discuss tissue donation please inform us as soon as you can by calling the National Referral Centre.

If you would like to discuss tissue donation in more detail or you have any further questions, you can contact a specialist nurse at the National Referral Centre.

National Referral Centre

Call **0800 432 0559 (Freephone)**

Visit **www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissuedonation**



NHS

Blood and Transplant

Tissue Donation

Information for families about giving the gift of tissue donation



Andrew was an enthusiastic, active, fun-loving man who died of pancreatic cancer aged 59

2425 0125 TLC202.4P ZXU1085



Tissue donation gives many families the opportunity to make a difference to others

We would like to offer this choice to you.

Every year, thousands of lives are saved and improved through organ donation. However further lives can be transformed through tissue donation.

Tissue such as skin, bone and heart valves can save and dramatically improve the quality of life for others. Cornea donation can enable people to see again.

A specialist nurse from NHS Blood and Transplant may contact you to offer the option of tissue donation for your relative. The nurse will be able to answer any questions you might have, to help you to decide if tissue donation is what your relative would have wanted. The nurse will call you within a few hours of your relative dying. This is necessary to enable donation to be possible.

This hospital supports tissue donation and we want to give all families the opportunity to fulfil patients' wishes.

Which tissues can be donated?

Eyes – donating corneas can enable people to see again. The cornea, the clear tissue at the front of the eye, can be transplanted to restore the sight of patients who have lost their vision due to damage

caused by disease or injury, or defects from birth. Most people can donate their corneas, age or poor eyesight does not necessarily stop people from donating.

Heart valves – help to save the lives of children born with heart defects and adults with damaged heart valves.

Skin – can be used as a natural dressing, helping to treat people with serious burns to stop infection and survive their injuries, as well as helping to reduce scarring and pain.

Bone – is important for people receiving artificial joint replacements, or replacing bone that has been removed due to illness or injury.

Tendons – help repair or replace damaged tendons or ligaments which enables people to move more easily.

Sonia – heart valve recipient

"I was born with a congenital heart defect and grew up knowing I would need a transplant at some point. I managed OK, it was only when I was about 14 that things started to become really noticeable. I couldn't walk across a street or speak to someone without



being breathless. Walking over a road would feel like a marathon.

"I was 17 when I had my transplant.

"It's a cliché, but it's like a new lease of life after transplant - you become so accustomed to being unwell and unable to do everyday activities, so being able to do all the things I loved doing before, such as tap dancing, was amazing. I tap danced for 12 years before my op and had to give up due to illness. I'm dancing again now and five months after my transplant I ran a 10k race!"

Andrew's story, told by his daughter Vivien

"Dad's cancer was one of the most aggressive tumours the specialists had ever seen, and it was just two months from his diagnosis until he died.

"The doctors told us it wouldn't be safe to donate his organs but that the one thing they could safely give to a patient was his corneas.

"We had a letter to say Dad's corneas had successfully been used for transplant. It's a miracle to us that someone somewhere has had their sight saved because of Dad."

