



**Share Your Life.  
Share Your Decision.  
Leave Your Legacy.**

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## Leave Your Legacy

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Every nine minutes, a new patient is added to the national transplant waiting list. With the number of recipients far exceeding the number of registered donors, it's time we have conversations with our family and friends about registering as an organ and tissue donor. Whether you are just learning about the options, considering becoming a donor, or already have decided to give the gift of life, let us help you on this journey. This guide can help you with ways to initiate such conversations.

## Making the Decision to Leave Your Legacy

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Being an organ and tissue donor is a personal and generous choice that saves lives every day. The need for organ and tissue donations is not limited to any gender, race or religion. It affects all of us – our families, our friends. If you are ready to consider leaving a legacy, you can find many trustworthy resources to help guide your decision:

- **Trusted organizations:** Legacy Donor Services Foundation is dedicated to educating you about organ and tissue donations. Reach out to us directly or visit the Donor Families page on our website for resources on making the decision to donate.
- **Organ and tissue banks:** Contact organ and tissue programs and ask to be connected with a recipient or donor family to learn about their personal experience.
- **Religious institutions:** Meet with your local clergy or members of your church to understand how this decision aligns with your beliefs and values.
- **News stories:** Look online to find personal stories about life-saving donations and transplants.



## Sharing Your Decision to Leave Your Legacy

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Once you decide to give the gift of life, the next step is to register and share your decision with your loved ones. We know there are misconceptions about organ and tissue donation, so having an open conversation with your loved ones will help ensure they understand your choice, know your wishes, and support you.

First, find the right time and place to connect without interruptions:

- **Family dinner:** Mealtime also can be sharing time for families. If you have a friend who has been a recipient or is the family of a donor, invite them to share their story.
- **Holidays:** Thanksgiving is the perfect time to share what you are thankful for. Talk about why you are grateful to be a donor and the benefits.
- **Social media:** Getting together in person with the entire family is not always an option. Many family members are on social media, making it a great platform to share your decision to donate.



## Family Discussion Guide for Becoming an Organ and Tissue Donor

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If not already registered, family members will make the ultimate decision to donate their loved one's organs and tissues following their death. But you can make your choices clear now. We know your loved ones will have lots of questions about your decision to become an organ and tissue donor, and here are the most common ones to expect, along with some answers to help you through the conversation. It's important to emphasize that you are starting a legacy to help others.

### Your Gift. Their Life.

#### **Why are we talking about this now? Are you sick?**

It's important for us to talk about this as a family now, because if something were to happen to me before I have registered my wishes to donate, you will have the final decision. I want to leave my legacy through my donation because I know I will be helping others, and I want to have your support with this decision.

#### **Why register as a donor?**

The need for organ and tissue donations far outweighs the number of registered donors, especially in minority communities. Donors and recipients from the same ethnic background are more likely to result in a successful match.

#### **How do you register?**

Registering is free and easy to do through the RegisterMe.org website. It adds all donors to a national database that helps expedite the matching process when it is needed. Anyone can be a potential donor.



### **What is the difference between organ and tissue donation?**

The body's tissues include bone, skin, heart valves, tendons and veins. These donations can be used to help save limbs, aid those suffering from severe burns, treat infections or cancer, and ultimately save lives. Organs include the heart, lungs, kidneys, intestines, pancreas and liver.

### **Who decides what is donated?**

When you register, every donor decides for themselves. Specific tissues and organs may be donated, and others excluded.

### **How are recipients chosen?**

The Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, the national database of all U.S. patients waiting for a transplant, is notified when organs or tissues become available. They work to identify patients who match the donor, and then coordinate with the transplant team of the best-matched patient. One donor can help save up to eight lives.

### **Will the hospital not provide life-saving treatment if you are registered as an organ or tissue donor?**

When admitted into a hospital, the number one priority is always to save my life. Organ and tissue donation is only an option for those who are of imminent death or have passed away.

### **Is donation against our religion?**

All major religions in the United States support donation and see it as the final act of love and generosity toward others.

### **Will we be able to hold funeral services?**

My donation does not interfere with funeral or burial arrangements, including open-casket viewings. Also, donations do not affect the timing of the funeral or burial arrangements.



## Encouraging Others to Leave Their Legacy

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You have gone through the donor registration process and are officially a registered donor – congratulations and thank you! You can help spread the word to give more people a chance for a lifesaving transplant. There are several ways to encourage others to give the gift of life, and it starts with you!

**Volunteer:** Contact Legacy Donor Services Foundation or other donor organizations to lend a helping hand and guide others through this process.

**Share your story with us:** Send us a picture and explain why you made this important decision. We can share your story on social media.

**Share with your place of worship or community:** Submit your donor experience story for consideration in a newsletter, social media feed or website.

**Share with your workplace:** Ask your employer if you can start a campaign for National Donate Life Month in April. Tell your coworkers about your experience or ask to present at a company-wide meeting.

**Use your personal social media:** Post on social media and share your experience with your followers. Let them know you are open to answering any questions.





## About Legacy Donor Services Foundation

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Legacy Donor Services Foundation is an American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB) accredited organization responsible for the recovery and care of tissue donations, as well as providing educational resources for would-be donors and their families. Our mission is to ensure that we honor every donor where their journey will leave a lasting legacy and through this act of kindness of donation, provide hope and life to others. Follow Legacy Donor Services Foundation on Facebook and Instagram (@legacydsfoundation) and join the conversation using the hashtag [#LeaveYourLegacy](#).





[www.legacydsfoundation.com](http://www.legacydsfoundation.com)

