ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION
A FAMILY GUIDE



NJ Sharing Network
saving lives through organ and tissue donation

To Honor. To Remember. To Give Hope.

To the world you may be one person; but to one person you may be the world.

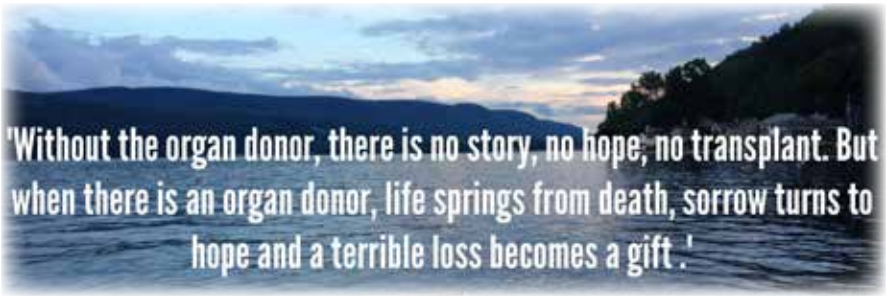
Dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation, NJ Sharing Network is the non-profit organization responsible for the recovery and placement of donated organs and tissue for the more than 3,000 New Jersey residents waiting for a lifesaving transplant, and is also part of the national recovery system, serving the over 100,000 people on the national waiting list.

At this time of sadness and loss, we offer our sympathy. We hope you find comfort in knowing your loved one may help others through the gift of organ and tissue donation.

At the difficult time of a loved one's death, families are required to make many important decisions. This booklet is intended to provide information enabling families to make an informed decision about organ and tissue donation.

Donation is an act of compassion and generosity. Families often find comfort in knowing that something good has come out of a tragic loss; others know that their loved one would want to help others.

Donation gives your loved one the opportunity to give the gift of life and leave a legacy of hope and love to everyone it touches.



-United Network for Organ Sharing

UNDERSTANDING DEATH

The donation process begins after all lifesaving efforts have been exhausted, and multiple tests confirm the total loss of brain function and death has been declared, or the family has decided to withdraw mechanical ventilation when death is imminent. Death occurs when there is irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, or when there is irreversible cessation of all circulatory and respiratory functions. In other words, there are two ways of determining death: brain death or circulatory death.

Brain death occurs as a result of severe trauma, injury or lack of oxygen to the brain. Brain death is death. It is permanent and cannot be reversed. It is not the same thing as being in a coma. A patient in a coma continues to have brain activity and function. Once the diagnosis of brain death is made, the individual is pronounced legally dead. A physician (not involved with the organ donation or transplantation team) conducts the examination and required medical tests to make the diagnosis of brain death.

Circulatory death occurs when the heart stops irreversibly and is no longer able to pump blood and oxygen through the body.

"I am forever grateful for my donor who unselfishly gave me the gift of life. This gift is like no other, and I will always keep my donor and his family in my prayers."

Reverend Dr. Valerie M. Griffin - Kidney Transplant Recipient



AUTHORIZATION OR NOTIFICATION FOR DONATION

If your loved one made a decision to be a donor, that generous decision will be honored. A document of gift, such as a donor registry or Advanced Directive (living will) is a binding legal document recognized by state law and honored by NJ Sharing Network. If your loved one has not documented a decision about donation, the highest person authorized to do so (i.e. health care proxy or legal next of kin) will make the decision on their behalf. Families of organ and tissue donors overwhelmingly say their loved one's donation gave them strength, and they find comfort in knowing that their loved one was able to help others through the gift of life.

EVALUATION

NJ Sharing Network will evaluate a patient to determine if they have the potential to become an organ and/or tissue donor. An essential part of this evaluation comes from the family. A NJ Sharing Network staff member will work with you to complete your loved one's medical and social history. The questions asked are similar to those asked when donating blood and are necessary to ensure safety for the recipients.

DONATION AFTER BRAIN DEATH

The option of organ donation is discussed after brain death is determined. After authorization is obtained or notification is completed, the process of organ and tissue donation will begin. Your loved one will remain in the Critical Care Unit on a ventilator to provide blood and oxygen to vital organs. During this time, medical tests will be performed to determine eligibility for organ and tissue donation. As soon as testing is completed and recipients are identified, the operation will be scheduled. This is done as quickly as possible and NJ Sharing Network will support your family throughout the process.

DONATION AFTER CIRCULATORY DEATH

There are times when a family makes the decision to withdraw life support. Following this decision, families may be given the opportunity to consider organ and tissue donation. This type of donation is called donation after circulatory death.

Following authorization or notification, medical tests will be performed to determine eligibility for organ and tissue donation. Once testing is completed, arrangements will be made with the family for the breathing machine to be removed and comfort care medications will be administered by the hospital healthcare team. If the heart stops beating within a specified time frame, the organ recovery surgery will proceed.

If death does not occur within the specified time frame, organ donation will not occur. Tissue and eye donation may still be an option at the time of your loved one's death. Your family will be guided throughout this process by NJ Sharing Network staff. Every effort will be made to maximize your loved one's legacy.



"The greatest love you can give to anyone is to give the gift of life."

Reverend Dr. Vanessa M. Brown
Rivers of Living Water
Newark, NJ

IN MEMORIAM

We believe that donation of organs and tissue is a compassionate and heroic gift.

Many families look to NJ Sharing Network for assistance in honoring their loved one's gift of donation in their obituary. We offer the following suggestion: *(Your loved one's name) gave the gift of life through organ and tissue donation.*

Several weeks after your loved one's donation, you will receive a letter with information on the organs and tissue that were recovered, as well as general information about the recipients of your loved one's organs. The names and other specifics will not be revealed to uphold confidentiality of both the donor and the recipients.

Information about the gift of your loved one's tissue will be available a year or more after the donation. If your loved one's corneas or eyes are donated, you will receive a letter from the eye bank explaining the outcome of the eye donation and how it will help the individuals in need.

"It is so unique to become an organ donor. The fact that Dan was able to do that helped our family to heal."

Jane Buckiewicz - Mother of Organ and Tissue Donor, Dan Buckiewicz



YOU ARE FOREVER A PART OF OUR FAMILY

You and your family will always be remembered for your compassion and kindness. Feelings of pain and grief may remain long after a death and we will continue to support you. Our Family Services team will contact you to answer your questions, offer grief resources, and opportunities to continue to honor your loved one's legacy such as Quilts of Love, Remembrance Programs, 5K Celebration of Life and the Landscape of Life Memorial Garden.

"Realizing our son could help someone else one last time gave our life meaning again."

Ezequiel and Iris Garcia - Parents of Organ and Tissue Donor, Reinaldo Garcia



For further information, contact our Family Services team at 908-516-5411 or FamilyServices@njsharingnetwork.org. Visit us online at NJSharingNetwork.org/Donor-Families/

Q. What is the organ and tissue recovery process?

A. Transplant surgeons come to the hospital to perform the organ recovery. This surgery is done in the operating room, and the organs are immediately transported to the transplant centers where the recipients are waiting. Tissue recovery will follow organ recovery. NJ Sharing Network's team ensures the recovery process is done with the utmost dignity and respect. Prior to the recovery, while in the operating room, a moment of silence is observed, remarks about the donor provided by the family are read aloud, and the donor's favorite music can be played throughout the process. A reverent and respectful atmosphere is maintained.

"When Betsy passed away, that was the darkest day of my life. Knowing she saved lives as an organ and tissue donor has been the silver lining in the dark cloud."

Dan Sarnowski - Life Partner of Organ and Tissue Donor, Betsy Niles



Q. Is there a cost to donate organs and tissue?
A. There is no cost to the donor family for anything related to organ or tissue donation. Donation is a gift. The family of the donor is responsible for hospital charges not related to donation and for funeral arrangements, but will not be charged for anything associated with donation. If you receive a bill that you believe includes donation costs, please contact our Family Services team at (908) 516-5411.

Q. How will organ and tissue donation affect funeral arrangements?
A. Organ and tissue donation does not interfere with funeral arrangements or the ability to have an open casket viewing. A large part of the respect shown to our donors is evident in the care our surgeons and technicians take during the recovery surgery. If you have any special considerations for funeral arrangements please discuss them with your NJ Sharing Network team member.

Q. What organs can be donated?
A. Organs that can be donated for transplantation include heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys and intestines.

"Thanks to my transplant and my donor, my MCL has healed and I can do the things I love."

Ursula Widocki - Tissue Recipient



Q. How do organs get matched to recipients?
A. NJ Sharing Network follows the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) regulations to match donated organs to recipients. This system is designed to fairly distribute organs based on many criteria such as compatibility, wait times and medical urgency.

Transplant centers make the decision to accept an organ for their recipients. Once all of the organs have been paired with their recipients, the recovery surgery is scheduled.

All attempts will be made to transplant every organ that has been donated. Your loved one will be honored and remembered for their gift of life to others.

Q. What tissue can be donated?
A. Tissue that may be donated for transplantation includes corneas/eyes, skin, bones, soft connective tissue, tendons, ligaments, saphenous veins and heart valves.

Q. How is donated tissue used?
A. Tissue donation provides a life enhancing gift that is given after death. Tissue transplants can dramatically change and improve the quality of life for many individuals. Bone is used to replace those injured or suffering from cancer, arthritis and other degenerative or traumatic conditions. In the most dramatic of instances it may even prevent amputation. Soft tissue, such as tendons and ligaments, are used to repair those damaged by injuries. Skin can be used for burn victims, repair of hernias and abdominal wounds, as well as for reconstructive surgery following mastectomies. Saphenous veins are used in vascular surgeries. Heart valves replace those damaged by disease or deformities and offer the chance of an active life for many children and adults. Eye tissue restores the precious gift of sight.

For more information, visit
www.NJSharingNetwork.org/Donor-Families-Recipients



Pictured on front and back cover is our Landscape of Life Meditation Garden honoring organ and tissue donors.

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