

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

### Donation & Transplantation

Myths and misconceptions are some of the greatest barriers to having more people sign up to become an organ donor. Use the facts below in response to some of the most prominent questions and concerns about donation. Incorporate these into your conversations and social media posts.

#### Myths and Facts:

- **Myth 1:** I have a medical condition so I can't be an organ donor.
- **Fact 1:** Don't rule yourself out. Everyone has the potential to save and transform lives as an organ and tissue donor regardless of age, health or medical history. A person's ability to donate is evaluated after they die in a hospital.
  
- **Myth 2:** I'm too old to be a donor.
- **Fact 2:** There's no age limit for organ donation. In fact, organs from older donors can be used for older patients who need a transplant. The oldest U.S. donor to date was 98. You never know what individual organs may still be healthy enough to save lives!
  
- **Myth 3:** I don't think my religion supports donation.
- **Fact 3:** All major religions in the United States support organ donation as a generous, final gift of kindness toward others.
  
- **Myth 4:** If I'm registered as a donor on my license, they won't try to save me if I'm sick or in an accident.
- **Fact 4:** In a hospital or at an accident scene, the one and only priority is to save your life. Period. Donation is not an option for any family until all hope of saving their loved one is gone. Only then does Gift of Life step in to support a hero's family through the donation process with kindness and respect.
  
- **Myth 5:** Rich or famous people on the transplant waitlist get organs faster.
- **Fact 5:** A national computer system matches donated organs to recipients. The factors used in matching include blood type, time spent waiting, other important medical information, how sick the person is, and geographic location. Race, income, and celebrity are NEVER considered.
  
- **Myth 6:** My family will have to pay for the donation.
- **Fact 6:** There is no cost to donors or their families for organ or tissue donation.
  
- **Myth 7:** Somebody could take my organs and sell them.
- **Fact 7:** Federal law prohibits buying and selling organs in the U.S. Organ donation and transplantation is a very complex process regulated by law and using a national database to carefully match organs with recipients. Donor programs, hospitals and transplant surgeons follow the highest ethical standards and federal laws to save lives through the generosity of donors and their families.

- **Myth 8:** My family won't be able to have an open casket viewing if I'm a donor.
- **Fact 8:** All types of funeral and burial arrangements are compatible with organ, tissue, and cornea donation. A donor hero is treated with the utmost care, respect, and dignity throughout the donation process.
- **Myth 10:** People in the LGBTQ community can't donate.
- **Fact 10:** There is nothing to prohibit members of the LGBTQ community from being an organ donor hero other than the health of their organs at the time of death. Everyone has the powerful potential to save and transform lives and is urged to sign up to become a donor.

#### **Additional Fast Facts:**

- **95% of people support organ donation**, according to surveys.
- The impact of one donor is powerful! **One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people**, and a tissue donor can improve the lives of 100 others.
- The need for more registered donors is urgent: **17 people die each day waiting** for an organ transplant.
- In our region, about **5,000 children and adults** need an organ transplant to survive.
- Nationally, **more than 100,000** children and adults are on the organ transplant waitlist.
- **More than half** of the patients on the transplant waitlist are from **communities of color**.
- Close to 90% of waitlist patients in Gift of Life's region need a kidney transplant.
- **Every eight minutes**, another person is added to the national transplant waitlist.
- Being registered to become an organ donor does **not** affect the medical care someone receives when sick or injured and is compatible with any type of funeral arrangements a family chooses.
- Organ donation is a possibility only after all efforts to save a patient's life have been exhausted, tests have been performed to confirm the absence of vital signs, and brain death has been declared.
- **Organ donation is extremely rare**, making the need for more registered donors so critically important. Only 1-2% of people die in a way that allows for organ donation after death in a hospital.
- The recovery of precious organs and tissues for transplant is done with extreme **care, sensitivity, and respect**.
- **Tissue donation** includes bone for orthopedic and sports injuries, skin for burn patients and reconstructive surgery for breast cancer patients, heart valves to repair life-threatening defects and corneas to provide the gift of sight.
- **About Gift of Life Donor Program:**
  - Since 1974, Gift of Life has coordinated more than 59,000 organ transplants and more than 2 million life-enhancing tissue transplants.
  - Gift of Life's region is the eastern half of Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware.

- Gift of Life works with 126 acute care hospitals and 12 transplant centers in its region, as well as hundreds of transplant centers throughout the country, to provide the most comprehensive array of services available in the U.S. to the donation and transplantation community.

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