

## General Principles

In general, organs are regarded as **life saving** and tissues are **life enhancing**. Only those who die in specific circumstances are eligible to even be considered as an organ donor. There are no such circumstances needed for potential tissue donors.

The suitability of an organ or tissue donor is determined by the transplant team after death, with extensive medical tests and research into the patient's medical history. While there are general guidelines, each case is treated individually, looking at:

- ▶ The vitality (function) of the organs or tissues it is possible to donate; and
- ▶ The chance of survival of the recipient without those organs or tissues.

Transplant teams are generally more willing to take risks with those patients who need a life saving organ and will die without it.

## Common Questions

**The Australian Organ Donor Register form asks me to tick which organs and/or tissues I would want to donate. How do I know which ones would be healthy enough to donate?**

The answer to this, as with most of these questions, is that the principle still remains that registering is about your decision regarding donating, not your medical suitability or that of particular organs. That will be determined at the time of death.

**I am over 65. Could my organs and tissues be suitable for donation?**

Yes. General health is far more important than age. Older healthy organs and tissues can still save and improve recipients' lives.

**What if I have received treatment for a medical condition (eg chemotherapy): could my organs and tissues be suitable?**

Yes. Organs and tissues of patients who have received treatment for a medical condition may be suitable for donation.

**I have a chronic illness (eg diabetes, heart disease, cancer, hepatitis): could my organs and tissues be suitable?**

Yes. There are patients with these conditions on the waiting list so, for example, a donor with hepatitis C can donate to a recipient with hepatitis C.

In cases where a recipient has nothing to lose, the transplant team may decide to use the organs from a patient with a chronic illness because of the life saving nature of the organs.

**I am not allowed to donate blood; could my organs and tissues be suitable?**

Some people are excluded from giving blood due to particular circumstances (eg people who were in the United Kingdom for more than 6 months cumulatively between 1980 and 1996).

Yes. Again, the determination of suitability will be made at time of death.

**If the register is one of consent, can I change my mind regarding donation?**

Yes. Just complete a new form and tick the box marked "I am registered on the Donor Register and no longer wish to be an organ or tissue donor". Don't forget to tell your family of this change.

**I am an organ and tissue donor on my licence. Do I still need to register?**

Yes. The Australian Organ Donor Register covers all of Australia; if your patient moves or has an accident in a different State, their wish will be accessible. In some States, the road and traffic authority is not linked to the Australian Organ Donor Register and their wish to donate on their licence may be lost.

**If I become a donor, will my organs and tissues be used for research purposes?**

No. Separate and specific permission is required for donated organs and tissues to be used for research purposes.

**Who can access information held on the Australian Organ Donor Register?**

Information recorded on the Australian Organ Donor Register can be accessed by authorised personnel who have signed confidentiality agreements covering the use of personal information. They are authorised by a management committee comprising representatives from Medicare Australia, the Department of Health and Ageing, and State organ donation agencies.

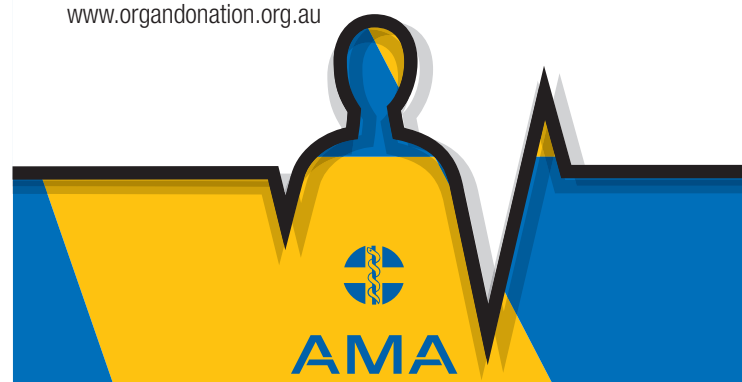
If you or your patients require further information, please contact:

**Australians Donate**

(03) 9696 0651

[www.organdonation.org.au](http://www.organdonation.org.au)

# Doctors and Organ Donation



**AMA**

