



## **Facts About Organ and Tissue Donation** (from actual questions received by Lifesharing staff)

In addition to raising awareness about the critical need for organ and tissue donation, Lifesharing and its Volunteers provide information to correct common misconceptions and answer concerns. Actual questions received include:

***I'm Already Registered*** – The pink sticky donor dot and card on driver licenses issued before July 1, 2006 are **NOT** registered anywhere and the online registry has been in place only since April 2005. People are encouraged to help save lives and make their pink dots stick by signing up online today at [www.donateLIFECalifornia.org](http://www.donateLIFECalifornia.org) or in Spanish at [www.doneVIDACalifornia.org](http://www.doneVIDACalifornia.org).

>> It takes only minutes to sign up and can mean a lifetime to someone else.

***I Can't Donate*** – Don't assume you can not be a donor even if you are unable to give blood or perhaps have had cancer or Hepatitis C. Today, for instance, we are able to transplant organs from Hepatitis C patients in to people who already have that disease. Hopefully donation will improve their quality of life until a cure becomes available.

Eighty-five percent of all people will be able to donate life-enhancing tissue, which includes skin, corneas, heart valves, tendons, ligaments, bone and more. Fewer people are able to be organ donors, which requires that death occur in a hospital with the patient on ventilator support. To avoid disappointment, Lifesharing works hard to avoid approaching a family if the patient's medical history indicates the patient can't be a donor. We also will keep your family posted on our efforts.

If you'd like to be a donor, please register. Don't rule yourself out. Let the Lifesharing professionals determine at the time of death if you are eligible to save another's life through the miracle of organ and tissue donation.

***My 'Stuff' is Worn Out*** – Even if you feel your organs and tissue are worn out, they can be a blessing to someone whose organs and tissue have failed. **One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people and improve the lives of up to 50 people through tissue donation.** Lifesharing reviews medical history and performs tests to protect the safety of the recipient and ensure that any tissue or organ recovered likely can be transplanted. If it doesn't appear that transplantation will be possible, recovery surgery will not take place.

***Will Donating Hurt?*** Lifesharing recovers organs only from deceased donors so donation occurs only after death. There is no pain.

***I'm Too Old*** – Chances are very good you aren't too old. The oldest donor Lifesharing is aware of was 110 years of age when she donated her corneas for research. Recently Lifesharing recovered life-saving lungs, which are very fragile, from a nearly 68-year-old donor. This donor saved a total of five lives through organ donation. The oldest recipient in our area? A Carlsbad woman who received the gift of sight at the age of 109 years.

***They Won't Try to Save Me*** – The hospital team that works so hard to save your life doesn't even know if you're a donor because they do not have access to the secure Donate Life California Registry. Once they have determined it is not possible to save your life, Lifesharing is contacted. As a safeguard, California law also requires two separate physicians not affiliated with transplant to verify brain death.

***Famous or Rich People Get Priority*** – Organs are allocated according to medical criteria such as blood type, height, weight, and the urgency of medical need -- not according to a patient's financial, political, social or celebrity status. To ensure fairness in the United States it also is illegal to buy or sell organs.

***My Family Can't Afford for me to be a Donor*** – Donor families incur no expense for donation. Lifesharing is a non-profit division of UCSD Medical Center. Because transplantation is a very cost-effective alternative, our expenses are reimbursed by insurance companies, Medicare and Medi-Cal. Funeral expenses and the cost of care before donation do remain the family's responsibility.

***What Happens to My Body?*** Donation is a surgical procedure that occurs shortly after death. We consider donors to be heroes and treat them with great respect. The body is restored and returned to the family for burial or cremation according to your plan. An open casket funeral is still possible, if desired.

***My Funeral Plans will Be Delayed*** – Donation does not delay funeral plans.

***I Don't Want to Think About Death*** – Most people don't like thinking about death, but it's still important to take a few minutes and register your decision to be a donor or not. It helps your family so much and ensures your wishes are followed. If you are registering online, you can even send an email to your family and friends to let them know what you want.

***I Don't have an email Address*** – Confirmation for registering online is sent by email. You may still register if you don't have an email address by 1) obtaining a free email address from [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com); 2) by using the email address of a family member, friend or pastor; 3) by checking 'Yes' on your driver license or ID card at the DMV; or 4) by calling Donate Life California at 866-pwr2don8 (866-797-2366) for a paper registration form.

***Donation is Experimental*** – We continue to learn new ways to make donation better and better, but it no longer is considered experimental. The first successful kidney transplant occurred more than 50 years ago!

***Does my Family Have to Meet my Recipients?*** No. We let our donor's family know how many people were helped by your precious gift of life, but donation is confidential for both donors and recipients. If they would like to correspond, we will facilitate a letter exchange. After that, if the recipient and donor family mutually decide to meet in person, we will help coordinate that very special meeting.

***I Have a Living Will*** – That is great, but please also register online or at the DMV. Recovery must occur within 24 hours of death. Sometime family members may not see your will or trust in time.

***My Church Doesn't Support Donation*** – Donation is consistent with the life-preserving traditions of ALL major religions in the United States.

***My Family Doesn't Agree*** – California is a 'first person consent' state. That means the decision to be a donor or not is your's. If you want to be a donor, please sign up. Our federal-mandate is to honor your wishes and most families are willing to do so also. In fact, Lifesharing's Family Services team members see a noticeable sigh of relief from families when we provide information to them outlining your wishes.

***Is Donor Registration Legally Binding?*** – Donor registration is legally binding. It is Lifesharing's responsibility as this region's federally-designated organ recovery organization to honor your request, but you also have the ability to easily change your mind. You can do so on the Registry or as noted below in the actual legislation:

*The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act provides a person other than the donor is barred from making, amending, or revoking an anatomical gift of a donor's body or part if the donor made an anatomical gift.*

*A donor may amend or revoke an anatomical gift that was not made in a will by any form of communication during a terminal illness or injury addressed to at least two adults, at least one of whom is a disinterested witness. The witnesses shall memorialize this communication in a writing and sign and date the writing.*

***Can I Donate my Whole Body?*** Full body donation for medical education or research can be coordinated through the University of California at San Diego. Call (858) 534-4536 for more information. Full body donation still permits donation of organs or tissue.

***Can I Limit What I Donate?*** You may limit what you donate through the online Donate Life California Registry at [www.donateLIFECalifornia.org](http://www.donateLIFECalifornia.org) or [www.doneVIDACalifornia.org](http://www.doneVIDACalifornia.org). If you registered at the DMV, it takes about a week for the registration to appear online. Then log-in online to make changes.

***My Pink Dot Fell off*** – By checking 'Yes' at the DMV, your name will be added to the California Donor Registry and the pink dot will be printed under the plastic on your driver license or ID card. (This means dots no longer fall off.) Through the Registry we will know your wishes regardless of the pink dot.

***What if I My Change Mind?*** It's easy to update your decision anytime at [www.donateLIFECalifornia.org](http://www.donateLIFECalifornia.org) or by calling Donate Life California during business hours at 866-pwr2don8 (866-797-2366).

***How Else Can I Help?*** Consider donating blood, registering on the national blood marrow registry and send an email about donation to your friends or colleagues. We'd also be delighted to have you volunteer with Lifesharing to help us save lives. Each day we are privileged to work heroes (the families of donors), with miracles (the people who have been given a second chance at life), with candidates on the waiting list and with the professionals at the 28 hospitals in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

For more information about donation, visit [www.lifesharing.org](http://www.lifesharing.org), email [info@lifesharing.org](mailto:info@lifesharing.org) or call 619-521-1983.