

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Tissue Donation

What is tissue donation?

Tissue donation allows for someone who dies to donate their tissue to change the life of someone with a life debilitating illness or disease.

Australia has one of the highest transplant success rates. There are many people's lives that are transformed by donation.

Who can donate?

Neither age nor gender is a limit to the donation of tissues. Children can donate tissues even if they are not able to donate organs. Tissue donation can happen up to 24 hours after death.

What can be donated?

In Australia you can donate your tissues including corneas, heart valves and bone. Tissues donations undergo strict medical processes to ensure they are free of infection before they can be transplanted into a patient. A specialist in this area will be able to tell you what your child could donate.

When does organ donation occur?

Tissue donation occurs after someone has died. This can be after brain death (when the blood stops going to the brain and all the cells of the brain die) or after circulatory death (when the heart stops beating). The doctors will talk to you to see if tissue donation is the right thing for your family. The decision is one that you and your family need to be comfortable with in the years to come.

How does donation proceed?

If your family is considering donation, a doctor or nurse who specialises in tissue donation and supporting families will meet with your family to talk about it. You will be given time to be with your child and decide if this is right for your family.

There is some paperwork they will fill out with you to consent to the donation. The tissue bank staff will organise highly specialised staff to perform the surgery. The donation specialist nurse will keep in touch with your family to update you and provide support.

What will it look like?

Donation occurs under sterile techniques like any operation. Your child will look the same in appearance and shape and be treated with dignity and respect. Any surgical sites will have dressings placed on them; none of this will prevent you from spending time with your child before or after the procedure.

Is it against my religion?

Most religions support and approve of tissue donation as the greatest gift to save life. Religious or spiritual leaders can be contacted to talk to you about this.

What if there is a coronial investigation?

The doctors will tell you if your child's death needs to be investigated by the Coroner. Tissue donation may still occur with permission from the Coroner.

Can we have a normal funeral?

There should be no effect to the funeral service because of tissue donation.

What will it cost?

There is no charge to the family

Can I choose the person to get the donated tissue?

No. There are strict rules for selecting recipient based on the best match and need for the tissue.

What support will my family get?

The organ and tissue donation specialist staff will help your family through the donation process and answer any questions you might have.

How do I register to be a donor?

The Australian Organ Donor Register is a national register for you to record your decision about donation for transplantation. You can register an intent to donate from the age of 16 years and fully register from the age of 18 years. It is very important to discuss this decision with your family so they know your wishes.

You can register your decision at:

www.donorregister.gov.au