

Talking to Your Family

Once you have decided and documented your decision to become a donor, the most important step is talking to your family about your wishes. Even if you have registered as a donor, it is important that your family knows about your decision.

The reason being, hospital staff will talk with the next-of-kin of potential donors about their feelings regarding donation and what their loved one would have wanted. Out of respect for grieving families, they are asked to provide the final consent, even if there is a signed donor card.

And while everyone, no matter their age, should consider themselves a potential donor, ultimately the ability to donate depends on several factors. These include the medical condition of the potential donor and the health of the organs and tissue at the time of death.

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You may find the topic of organ and tissue donation an uncomfortable one to think about, let alone make a firm decision. But keep in mind that when someone passes away suddenly, his or her family is often faced with this difficult decision at the worst of times.

The situation can be made a little easier if your family is aware of your wishes. Knowing that a loved one's final wishes were carried out, and helped to save lives in the process, can be a great source of solace. Here are some ideas about discussing this important decision with your family:

- Prepare for your conversation. Think about possible questions and seek answers.
- Talk about the subject where it feels comfortable and natural. Where does your family feel most comfortable discussing sensitive issues?
- Have the discussion with your loved ones and anyone else who may need to know.
- Who would be called to your bedside if you were about to die? These are the people who will be asked for consent to proceed with donation.
- Talk to them about your decision and listen openly to their concerns.
- Explain why their support is important to you and to people who receive donations.

Tell your family you have registered as a donor through OHIP so they can understand, support and respect your wishes in the future.

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