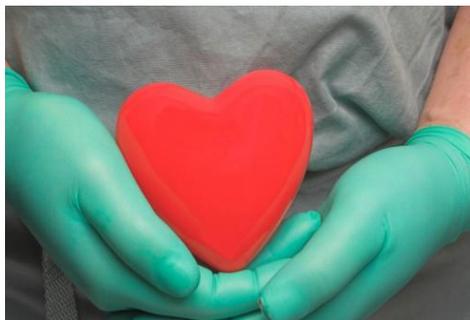


Saving Lives Through Organ and Tissue Donation

The number of people waiting for a donated organ could fill a large football stadium— twice. And every 10 minutes, someone new is added to the waiting list. Every day, 18 of them will die waiting, because of the shortage of available organs, says the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

The gift of life

Organ and tissue donation can be thought of as a gift that benefits not only the recipients, but also the families of those who chose to donate.



Maria Barrionuevo, executive director of heart and vascular services at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, recounts one family's story where a teenager was killed in a tragic car accident. "The parents were completely devastated, and they decided to donate their son's organs," she says. "They felt that he would be proud they made that decision. In the end, they felt comforted by the fact that his life was not in vain, and would be remembered through other people.

Becoming a donor

Illinois residents who want to register as organ donors can do so online, over the phone (800.210.2106) or at any Secretary of State facility. The Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is another great place to get information. www.giftofhope.org.

The state of Wisconsin currently has more than 2,000 people waiting for donated organs, according to the state's Department of Health Services. Wisconsin residents can register as organ donors at www.donatelifewisconsin.org.

Talking About Organ Donation

Although the process to sign up and become a donor is easy, many choose not to become organ donors. One reason is the myths and misconceptions that people have about donation.

Some common myths include:

Myth: Hospitals won't save organ donors because they'd rather get the organs. The truth is hospitals don't usually have access to the registry. So, they don't know who's a donor.

Myth: Family members cannot see the body at an organ donor's funeral. Actually, organ donation does not change the deceased person's appearance.

Myth: Rich and famous people waiting for organs are moved to the top of the waiting list. The reality is that medical urgency determines who gets most organs, along with whether there's a match and how long the person needing the organ has been on the waiting list.

Myth: My religion doesn't allow organ or tissue donation. In fact, most religions support organ and tissue donation as one of the highest expressions of compassion and generosity.

The best way to change these misconceptions is to spread the word about organ and tissue donation and talk about it with your family, friends and your faith community.

Prayer: God of miracles. You have made our bodies with an amazing ability to heal and adapt. Thank you for all those who donate their organs and tissues so that another person may have life.