

# FACTSHEET

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## Tissue donation

### What is tissue donation?

A tissue in the body is a group of cells that have a similar shape and job to do (eg; muscles).

Tissue donation is when a child who has died is able to give 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?

Most people can donate their 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. Tissue donations must pass strict medical processes to make sure that 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 tissue donation happen?

Tissue donation happens after someone has died. 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 happen?

If your family is thinking about donating, a doctor or nurse who specialises in tissue donation and supporting families will talk to your family about the process. 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 do the surgery. The donation specialist nurse will keep in touch with your family to update you and provide support.

### What will it look like?

Tissue donation is done in an operating theatre. Your child will look the same in appearance and shape and be treated with dignity and respect. Any places where tissue is taken from will have dressings put on them. This will not stop you spending time with your child before or after the procedure.

### Is it against my religion?

Most religions approve of tissue donation, as one of the greatest gifts is to save a life. You can contact religious or spiritual leaders to talk about this.

### What if there is a coronial investigation?

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

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### **Can we have a normal funeral?**

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

### **What will it cost?**

There is no charge to your family.

### **Can I choose the person to get the donated tissue?**

No. There are strict rules for who will receive the tissue donation. The person who will benefit from the donation is selected 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 have.

The donation process can be stopped at any time by the immediate family if you change your mind.

### **How do I register to be a donor?**

The Australian Organ Donor Register is a national register for you to record your decision about organ and tissue donation. You can register that you want 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](http://www.donorregister.gov.au)