

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.

Organ donation

What is organ donation?

Organs are parts of the body that have specific jobs (eg: the heart or liver).

Organ donation is when a child who has died is able to give their organs or tissue to a sick person to save their life or free them of painful and often debilitating medical treatments.

Even with the advances in modern medicine there are still many people on the transplant list, waiting for an organ transplant surgery. Australia has one of the highest transplant success rates in the world.

Who can donate?

Organ donation is rare and special. Not many children die in a way that allows donation of organs to occur. To be able to donate your organs you need to die in hospital, in an intensive care unit.

Tissue donation can be considered in most situations.

What can be donated?

In Australia you can donate your organs including your heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas and liver. Tissue can also be donated. These include: skin, heart valves and vessels, musculoskeletal tissue and eyes.

When does organ donation happen?

Organ donation happens after someone has died. To donate organs you need to be in hospital and in intensive care. Less than 1% of people die in circumstances that allow them to be considered for organ donation. The doctors will talk to you to see if organ donation is the

right thing for your family. This decision is one that you and your family need to be comfortable with for years to come.

How does donation happen?

If your family is thinking about donating an organ and/or tissue, a doctor or nurse who specialises in organ donation 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.

If you decide to donate, your consent will be documented and the Donation Specialist Nurse will help you through the next steps. It may take up to 24 hours after this before your child goes to theatre because of the coordination of the process. This includes organising surgeons and matching recipients. After the donation you can spend time with your child, usually in the intensive care unit. The donation specialist nurse will keep in touch with your family to update you and provide support.

What will it look like?

Donation is like any operation. It is done in an operating theatre. There is one cut made and then closed and covered with a dressing.

Is it against my religion?

Most religions approve of organ 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 the Coroner needs an autopsy. Organ donation may still happen with permission from the Coroner.

Can we have a normal funeral?

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

What will it cost?

There is no charge to your family.

Can I choose the person to get the organs?

No. There are strict rules for who will receive the organ. The person who will benefit from the donations is selected based on the best match and need for the organ.

What support will my family get?

The team in intensive care and the donor nurse specialist will help your family through the donation process and answer any questions you have. They will also give you support after the donation including information about the transplants if you wish, and access to support services and counselling. Later information on writing to the recipients anonymously can be provided.

The donation process can be stopped at any point 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 donation. You can register that you want to donate your organs 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