



# Organ Donation



## April is National Donate Life Month

National Donate Life Month was established in 2003. Every day in April, people across the U.S. make a special effort to celebrate the tremendous generosity of those who have saved lives by becoming organ, tissue, marrow, and blood donors and to encourage more Americans to follow their fine example.

## Who Can Donate?

### Most People Can Donate Organs and/or Tissue

All people of all ages should consider themselves potential organ and tissue donors. Potential donors will be evaluated for suitability when the occasion arises.

### You Are Never Too Old

No one is too old or too young. Both newborns and senior citizens have been organ donors. The condition of your organs is more important than age. Doctors will examine your organs and determine whether they are suitable for donation if the situation arises. If you are under 18, you will need the permission of a parent or guardian to donate.

### Medical Condition? Don't Rule Yourself Out

The transplant team's decision will be based on a combination of factors, such as the type of illness you have had, your physical condition at the time of your death, and the types of organs and tissues that would be donated.

## What Can Be Donated

### Organs

Organs cannot be stored and must be used within hours of removing them from the donor's body. Most donated organs are from people who have died, but a living individual can donate a kidney, part of the pancreas, part of a lung, part of the liver, or part of the intestine.

### Tissue

Corneas, the middle ear, skin, heart valves, bone, veins, cartilage, tendons, and ligaments can be stored in tissue banks and used to restore sight, cover burns, repair hearts, replace veins, and mend damaged connective tissue and cartilage in recipients.

## Stem Cells

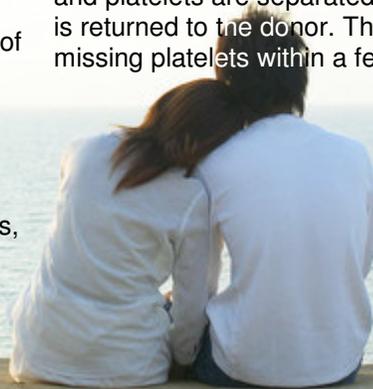
There are three sources of blood stem cells that healthy volunteers can donate:

- **Marrow**-This soft tissue is found in the interior cavities of bones and is a major site of blood cell production and is removed to obtain stem cells
- **Peripheral blood stem cells**-The same types of stem cells found in marrow can be pushed out into a donor's bloodstream after the donor receives daily injections of a medication called filgrastim. This medication increases the number of stem cells circulating in the blood and provides a source of donor stem cells that can be collected in a way that is similar to blood donation.
- **Cord blood stem cells**-The umbilical cord that connects a newborn to the mother during pregnancy contains blood and this blood has been shown to contain high levels of blood stem cells. Cord blood can be collected and stored in large freezers for a long period of time and therefore, offers another source of stem cells available for transplanting into patients.

## Blood and Platelets

It is safe to donate blood every 56 days and platelets twice in one week up to 24 times a year. It takes only about 10 minutes to collect a unit (one pint) of blood, although the testing and screening process means that you will be at the donation center close to an hour.

Platelets are tiny cell fragments that circulate throughout the blood and aid in blood clotting. Platelets can be donated without donating blood. When a specific patient needs platelets, but does not need blood, a matching donor is found and platelets are separated from the rest of the blood which is returned to the donor. The donor's body will replace the missing platelets within a few hours.



Source: [www.OrganDonor.gov](http://www.OrganDonor.gov)