



Honoring Choices[®]

VIRGINIA

Planning in Advance for Future Health Care Choices

Making the decision about donation

Donating your body or organs at the end of life is a personal decision. We answer below some of the most common questions about donation.

There are three choices you can make:

- I would like to donate my organs, eyes, or tissues.
- I would like to donate my whole body.
- I do not wish to donate.

Remember, you can always change your mind! Just make sure you change your advance directive and tell your loved ones.

What is organ, eye and tissue donation?

When someone dies, their organs, eyes or tissues may still be healthy and can be donated to a person in need. Donation from one person can save nine other peoples' lives and help 50 or more people live a better life. For example, someone with heart disease may need a new heart to live. Blind people may need parts from an eye to see, or burn victims can use the new skin so they can heal.

Here are some facts about organ donation that you should know when making a decision.

- Even if you are sick or older, donation may still be an option.
- There is no cost.
- There can be an open casket funeral and life celebrations can happen in a timely manner.
- Your health care agent cannot change your decision once it is written in your advance medical directive or driver's license.
- You should note your decision on your advance directive and on your driver's license or www.DonateLifeVirginia.org.

What is “whole body” donation?

You can donate your whole body to medical science. Donated bodies are used for medical research and education. In Virginia, you make these plans through the State Anatomical Program. Not all bodies are accepted, due to condition or current need.

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/va-state-anatomical-program>

It is not possible to be both an organ donor and a whole body donor.

Here are some facts to help you when making a decision:

- There may be transportation or funeral home fees. Your family may be responsible for these costs.
- The state cannot promise you where your body will go.
- At times, an organ or part from a body may be kept for a long time at a medical school.
- At the time of your death your family may request the return of your remains. It may take six months to several years before your family receives your remains.

How do I register to be a donor?

You will want to write your decision on your advance directive. Make sure to tell your health care agent and loved ones about your choice.

To register as an organ, eye and tissue donor: Most people do this through the DMV. This will put the heart symbol on your driver’s license. You can also register at www.DonateLifeVirginia.org.

To register for whole body donation: Complete the donor form at www.vdh.virginia.gov/stateanatomicalprogram. There are also private companies that can help.

What if I do not want to be a donor?

You can write this decision on your advance directive by crossing out the donation section and writing a statement such as, “I do not want to be a donor.” You will also want to tell your health care agent about your choice.