

Frequently Asked Questions

I currently have an organ donor decal on my CareCard, do I still need to register?

YES. The Organ Donor Registry replaced all previous ways of indicating your decision about organ donation. If you wish to register your decision, you can register online, or print and complete the paper registration form. Paper forms are also available at ICBC and Service BC offices.

Can a donor still have an open casket funeral?

Yes. At all times throughout the donation process, the donor is treated with the utmost respect. After the surgical recovery of the organs, the donor's body is released to the funeral home for preparation according to the wishes of the donor or family.

Are there religious objections to organ donation?

Most religions support and encourage donation as an act of life saving.

If I am a registered organ donor, will health care providers make every effort to save my life?

Yes. First and foremost the duty of health care providers is to save lives. Donation is only considered after all life-saving efforts have been exhausted and it is certain a patient will not survive. Your donor registration record is confidential, and only accessible by the donation team at BC Transplant. In addition, BC's Human Tissue Gift Act states that the death of a potential organ donor must be declared by two doctors, independent of transplant.

If I register does that mean I will be a donor?

Statistics show that you are more likely to need a transplant in your lifetime than you are to become an organ donor. Only about 1% of deaths in BC occur in a way that would permit the person to be an organ donor. To become a deceased organ donor in BC a person must be on life support in a critical care unit, with no hope of recovery.

Can I register if I have a medical condition?

Yes, you may still be able to be a donor. Register your decision and let the specialists determine if it is safe for you to donate.

Can I say who I want my organs to go to?

No. Organs from deceased donors are allocated 'without prejudice' following a comprehensive review and assessment process.

If someone has registered their decision with BC Transplant and their death occurs in another province or in the USA, will their decision stand?

Yes, organ donation organizations across the country and the US often work together. If this situation takes place, the first contact would be the person's family, then the agency may also contact BC Transplant to check if the person has registered their decision. Organ donation takes place in the province/state/country where the person dies, according to the policies and procedures in place in that region. The same applies if an out-of-province or international patient becomes eligible as a donor while in this province; BC would manage this process.)

Why did the decal system change?

The Provincial Organ Donor Registry was created to legally record a person's decision regarding organ donation. The information in the registry can be accessed by BC Transplant at the time donation is considered. The decal system was more of an honour system, and not an official or legal record.

Can I register my children?

Yes, you can register your children. You will need to sign the registration form for any child under 19 years of age.

If I have registered, can I change my decision?

Yes, you can change your decision online with your PHN or by completing a paper form. Your most up-to-date registration will be linked to your Personal Health Number.

Can my family override my decision?

Donation happens at a time of tragedy. At that time we ask the family if they are aware of any change in their loved one's decision, and will honour their wishes. In our experience, when a family sees a copy of the signed registration form it provides relief and comfort and helps them to move forward in fulfilling their loved one's wishes.

Can I donate my entire body to science as well?

Not if you choose organ donation. If you prefer to donate your body to science, contact: UBC Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences, at: anatomy@interchg.ubc.ca or call (604) 822-2578.

Does this mean I am also registered to be a living donor?

No. Living donation is an entirely different process.

Is there an age limit for organ donors?

No, the health of the donor is more important than the age of the donor. The oldest organ donor in Canada was 92, and the oldest organ donor in BC was 79.

Why don't we have an opt-out or presumed consent system where everyone is a potential donor unless they say otherwise?

This is one of the questions we hear most often, and it's a complex topic.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that strategies such as in-hospital transplant coordinators, education and training for medical professionals, and public education are more effective at increasing donor rates than presumed consent legislation. For example, Spain attributes its world-leading deceased donor rate primarily to its use of transplant coordinators, donation physicians and a robust education program for health care professionals with presumed consent legislation playing a lesser role.

For that reason, British Columbia is focused on first investing in these foundational elements to support and increase donation, including donation physicians, education of health care professionals, and implementation of donation after cardiac death. Without these foundational system elements in place, changing the consent legislation alone will not bring about the desired level of increase in donation.

What is BC doing to increase organ donation rates?

Over the last few years BC Transplant has implemented a number of changes that have significantly increased donation rates within the province. These initiatives include the introduction of 'In Hospital Organ Donation Coordinators' and the appointment of organ donation physician champions who work with hospitals throughout BC to support donation; expansion of donation programs within all health authorities; and a variety of health professional and public education and engagement activities.

How does someone become an organ donor?

To be identified as a potential donor a person must be in an Intensive Care Unit and be on a ventilator. Once it is determined that nothing more can be done for the patient and brain death has been declared or that death is imminent, the ICU physician will contact BC Transplant and speak to the on-call Organ Donor Specialist. The Organ Donor Specialist will access the Organ Donor Registry to see if that patient is a registered organ donor. If there is a registration form, the Specialist will print off the form and share the form with the family during a donation conversation.

I'm not eligible to donate blood. Can I still register my decision to be an organ donor?

Yes. Everyone is encouraged to register their decision for organ donation. There are no restrictions in terms of sexual orientation, previous/current medical conditions, or where you've previously lived.

I just turned 19 years old. Do I need to re-register my decision?

If you were registered as a child, we encourage you to re-register your decision when you turn 19 years old.

How can I make a financial donation for transplant?

BC Transplant does not accept monetary donations. If you would like to make a donation in support of transplant, please call the VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation at 604-875-4676 or 1-877-875-4676. Please direct your donation to the **Transplant Research Foundation of BC Fund**.

To make a gift by mail, send a cheque made out to VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation, 90-855 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9, Canada. Please indicate that the donation is for the Transplant Research Foundation of BC Fund in the memo line.

To make a gift online please visit trfbc.org.