



Corneal and Tissue Donation

This leaflet explains about
cornea and tissue donation,
and how the donation of a
cornea or other tissue can
help change lives

Corneal donation: Giving someone the gift of sight.

At St Elizabeth Hospice, we know that organ or tissue donation can help patients and families feel comforted by knowing they have given hope to others and that some good has come out of their loss. However, we also realise that not everyone feels comfortable with taking such a step.

If you are reading this leaflet you may be thinking about organ or tissue donation, but might be unsure whether this is possible for you or what is involved.

Referral for corneal donation

Most people can be considered as a tissue donor, including people with cancer. It does not matter if you have poor eyesight.

If you are uncertain whether or not you would be eligible, a member of our clinical staff will be happy to discuss this further with you.

- If you decide you wish to go ahead, we will make note of this in your hospice record and share this information with other clinical teams who look after you, such as your GP
- If you decide you would like to donate your corneas after your death, the most important thing is to tell your family and the healthcare professionals looking after you.
- The removal of corneas can be done at the hospice or the funeral directors, up to 24 hours after death by a specialist retrieval team, and is carried out with the same care and respect as any other procedure. It does not prevent relatives saying goodbye or affect funeral arrangements.
- Throughout the donation process the donor is treated with respect and dignity. After donation, care is taken to maintain the donor's natural appearance and relatives may visit their loved one after they have donated and before they are laid to rest.

What do I need to do if I wish to donate my corneas?

- Tell your closest family and friends about your decision
- You can join the Organ Donor Register by calling 0300 123 23 23 or online at www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissuedonation
- After you have died, one of our staff or your next of kin will need to contact the Tissue Services National Referral Centre on 0800 432 0559. The specialist nurse in tissue donation will return the call. This call should be made soon after death to allow arrangements

Here are some facts that may help you make up your mind:

- The cornea is the clear front window of the eye
- The donation of one person's corneas could help up to ten people to have their sight restored or improved
- Corneal transplant is a successful sight-saving operation with 93% of transplanted corneas working after 1 year and 74% still working after 5 years
- Both old & young patients can benefit. The youngest patient to receive a cornea transplant was a few days old and the oldest was 104
- Many more people would benefit from a sight-saving transplant if more corneas were donated.

If you have any questions that aren't answered in this leaflet, please talk them over with a member of staff who will be glad to help.

Other sources for further information include NHS Blood & Transplant online at:
www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissuedonation

Or call a nurse from the NHS Blood and Transplant National Referral Centre on:
0800 432 0559 (freephone)

Tell us what you think

Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services and provide better care and support for those who need it.

To make a comment or complaint, or to compliment us on something we've done well, please write to us or visit stelizabethhospice.org.uk

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Version: 01/23

