

# TISSUE DONATION

This leaflet provides  
information about tissue  
donation following a death



**Matthew's life was saved by  
donated heart valve tissue**

# WHAT IS TISSUE DONATION?

Many people are not aware that hundreds of lives are saved or improved each year by donated tissues such as heart valves and corneas. It is likely that up to ten people can be helped by the donation from one donor.

# WHICH TISSUES CAN BE DONATED?

## Eyes

The clear part of the eye (the 'cornea') or the white part (the 'sclera') of the eye can be transplanted to help restore the sight of patients with damaged, diseased or injured eyes and patients born with eye defects.

## Heart valves

Two valves, or small patches from a valve, can be transplanted to save the lives of babies and children born with heart defects, or they can be given to adults suffering with diseased or infected valves.

## Human tissue can also be donated for scientific and medical research

Brain and spinal cord tissue may be donated to help scientists understand conditions such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease and to develop new treatments.

*The pain of losing Elizabeth will always be with me, but it is wonderful to know she has given another baby the gift of life. It's like a small ray of sunshine on a very dark day.*

Comments from Tanya, the mother of a baby donor.

*I thought it was the greatest gift anybody could give, so it made a lot of difference to us, and our whole family were very pleased about it.*

Judith's comments after her husband's heart valves were donated and saved the lives of two children.

## **CAN ANYONE BECOME A TISSUE DONOR?**

Most people up to 75 years of age can be a tissue donor. To ensure that all donated tissues are safe, our Tissue Co-ordinator will need to ask you about the donor's medical and lifestyle history (similar to questions for blood donors).

## **WHAT ARE THE TIME LIMITS FOR TISSUE DONATION?**

Time limits for eye tissue donation are up to 30 hours after death; however heart valve donation is possible within 48 hours.

## **CAN YOU TELL IF THE PATIENT HAS BEEN A TISSUE DONOR?**

Throughout the donation process, the donor is treated with respect and dignity. After donation, our specialist team will ensure that the donor maintains a natural appearance. You may see your loved one after the donation if you wish.

## **WILL TISSUE DONATION INTERFERE WITH FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS?**

No, donation should not delay any funeral arrangements.

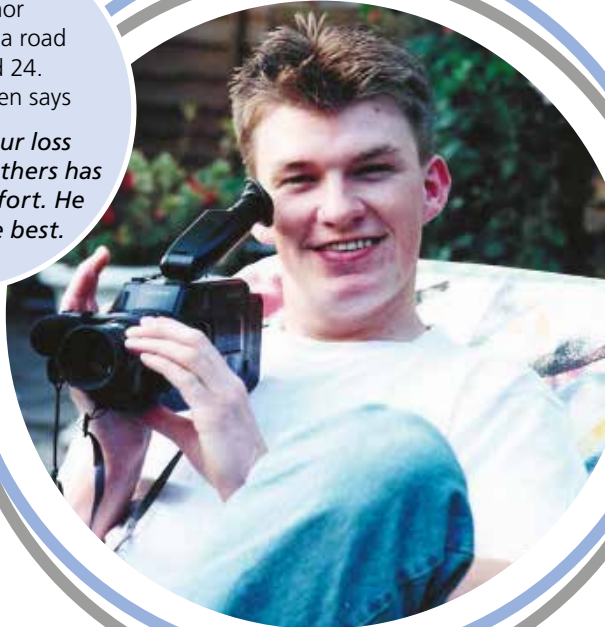
# CAN WE FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DONATION?

Yes, we will write to you to provide you with information after the donation and give you our contact details.

We can then later give you information about the transplant patients and the research your loved one has helped.

Martyn became a tissue donor after he died in a road accident aged 24. His mum Maureen says

*The fact that our loss helped so many others has brought us comfort. He was simply the best.*



## HOW DO WE AGREE TO TISSUE DONATION AFTER DEATH?

It is still possible **after death** for the person legally responsible for your relative to give permission for tissue donation to go ahead. Our Tissue Co-ordinator may arrange to call you to explain how this may take place.

## HOW TO FIND LOCAL HELP AND ADVICE

If you would like to discuss tissue donation in more detail, please contact the Tissue Bank staff.

Please call:

**01865 220076** (during office working hours) or

**01865 741166** (overnight and weekends) and ask switchboard for the Tissue Bank 24 hour on-call service.



*Sophie's life was saved after a tissue transplant operation.*

Her parents wrote back to thank the donor's family.

# HOW TO REGISTER AS A DONOR

Many people who would like to be a donor will carry a donor card or sign up for the Organ Donor Register when they **are alive**.

You can join the register:

Online: **[www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-to-donate](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-to-donate)**

Tel: **0300 123 2323**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **[PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk)**

Author: Oxford Heart Valve Bank  
November 2015  
Review: November 2018  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)

