

# Any age is the right age.

Organ, eye, and tissue donation  
for people 50 and over



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## Don't Waste the Most Precious Gift of All

More than 60 years ago, a 12-year-old named Nick left Greece to live in the U.S. Five years later, he became a U.S. citizen and began building a life for himself. For many years, Nick enjoyed good health. But in his 70s, tests revealed that his liver was failing and he would need a transplant.

Miraculously, less than a month later, a matching liver became available—from a donor several years older than Nick. The surgery was a success, and soon Nick was back to work. He's a registered donor himself. "Why waste such a precious gift, when someone can benefit from it?" he asks.

## How old can you be and still donate the gift of life?

Before you answer, ask yourself this:

How old can you be and still care about others?

At what age do you stop making a difference?

The truth is, love and caring are ageless. Just as ageless is your ability to register as an organ, eye, and tissue donor.

Today, *people of all ages* can sign up to be donors. People in their 50s ... 60s ... 70s ... and beyond. People over 50 can *receive* transplants as well. Surprised?

It makes sense. More people today are living healthier lives and know about the importance of eating well, being physically active, and not smoking. That means people are able to be donors *and* recipients longer than anyone might have imagined.

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Medical research and technical advancements have made transplants more successful for all. So, the number of people eligible for a transplant—and the age of those eligible to donate—continues to grow.

Have you said “yes” to donation? Any time is the right time to sign up. Right now is the perfect time! Just go to **organdonor.gov** to learn how to register in your state. The need is great, and donation is a beautiful way to pass life forward.



## A Powerful Force for Donation

Roxanne is on a mission. She and her son, Kellen, are talking to people, including seniors, about donation registration. “The first thing people over 50 say is...‘I’m too old. No one would want my organs.’ You’re never too old. Last year, someone in their 90s was an organ donor.”

Roxanne’s passion for donation comes from the heart—her new heart. A few years ago, Roxanne received a heart transplant. Her donor had been a young man, almost Kellen’s age. That’s when Roxanne decided to devote her life to donation. To date, she and her son have helped more than 1,500 people register as organ donors. “I want to sign up the most people in the United States,” she says, smiling. “That’s my goal.”

## The truth about donation

**Truth:** People of any age, even those with certain chronic medical conditions, may be organ, eye, or tissue donors.

**Truth:** People who are registered as donors receive the same patient care in hospitals as non-donors. Care doesn’t change if staff know you’re a donor. Doctors work to save the lives of all, equally.

**Truth:** The medical staff trying to save lives is completely separate from the transplant team. Every effort is made to save lives before donation is considered. Deceased donation takes place only after the patient’s death.

**Truth:** Most major religions in the United States support the gift of life as an act of charitable giving and do not prohibit organ, eye, and tissue donation.

### *Just the facts:*

**People who are registered as donors receive the same medical care in hospitals as non-donors. Care doesn’t change if staff know you’re a donor.**

**Truth:** Organ donation won’t interfere with having an open-casket funeral. Organs are removed surgically with the same respect and dignity as in other surgical operations.

**Truth:** There are absolutely no charges to the estate or family of organ, eye, and tissue donors for donation.

**Truth:** While still alive, individuals can donate a kidney, a lobe of the liver, a lung or part of a lung, part of the pancreas or intestines. Surprisingly, it is also possible for a living person to donate a heart, but only if he or she is receiving a replacement heart.



## The Gift of Life Means the Gift of Family

Kelvin had viral hepatitis, from a virus that attacks the liver. For almost 20 years he was stable. But one day at work, he remembers suddenly becoming desperately sick to his stomach and losing blood.

Kelvin was placed on the transplant waiting list. After four harrowing months, a matching organ was found. "It gave me hope; hope to see my sons grow up and spend more time with my wife."

Kelvin has recovered his health and remains grateful. "Without the transplant, I would have died 15 years ago," he says. "Now every day is a new day for me. I really appreciate the new life that I have been given."

## Why your decision matters so much

Organ, eye, and tissue donation are the greatest gifts anyone, of any age, can give. Here are just a few reasons why:

- There is a tremendous need. In June 2015, more than 122,000 people were on the national waiting list for an organ transplant. Each week, more than 100 of them will not receive an organ in time to save their lives.
- *More than 100 million individuals in the United States are aged 50 and over.* If the majority of people in this age group signed up, imagine how many more lives could be saved!
- Today, the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, small intestine, faces, and hands can all be transplanted.
- Tissue donors can improve the lives of many more people by donating corneas, heart valves, veins, tendons, bone, and skin.
- *Your age doesn't make you ineligible to sign up,* nor do you have to be in perfect health. Your ability to donate is determined at the time of death.
- Research shows that organs from older donors can be used effectively to save lives.
- Knowing that lives have been saved by a loved one's donation has helped many donor families deal with their grief.

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## Heart Recipient Lives to Give Back

Amalia and her husband Eduardo are very busy, watching four grandchildren after school. But Amalia is happy when she can help. A hard worker all her life, in her 50s, she began to feel weak and tired. She learned she would need a heart transplant—and received one just in time. “I knew I was in my final days,” she says.

Grateful for her gift, Amalia placed a memorial to her donor in her garden. “I just wanted a way to say thank you.” She continues to help others, and her family is happy to have their *abuela* back. Seeing them all together is a reminder of how many lives one donor can transform.

## Every ethnicity, every age: your help is needed

Organ, eye, and tissue transplants are needed by people in every corner of America. Infants to grandparents—people of all ages and from every racial and ethnic background—are on the national transplant waiting list.

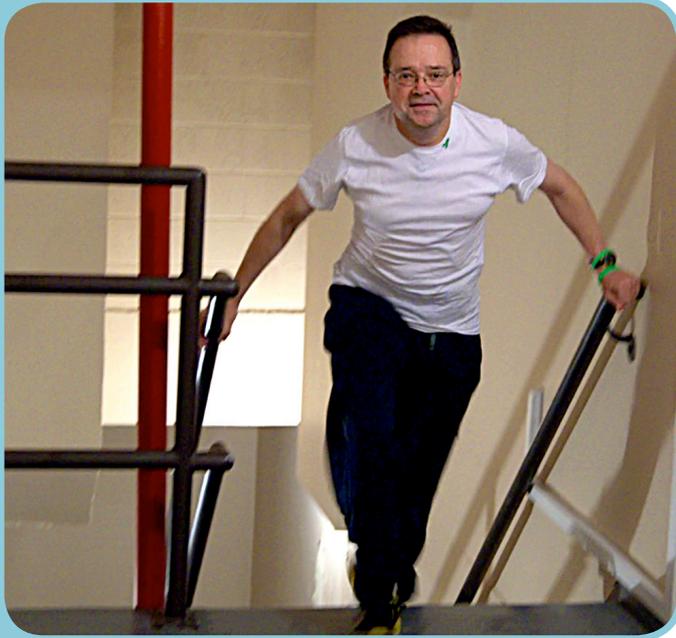
While a recipient and donor may not be of the same ethnicity or race, and people of different heritages often match one another, it is important that an organ donor and recipient have matching blood types.

**Donors of every race and ethnicity are needed. More than 122,000 men, women, and children are waiting for an organ and would have a better chance of receiving a transplant if there are more donors and more diversity among donors.**

Both Whites and non-Whites donate in proportion to their representation in the U.S. population, but the need for transplants in some groups is disproportionately high, most often due to a high rate of conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes, both of which can lead to the need for a transplant.

For example, more than 80 percent of individuals on the national waiting list for an organ transplant are waiting for a kidney. Of those, nearly 35 percent are African American.

People of all ages and ethnicities can make a difference and save lives by donating their organs, eyes, and tissues. Choosing to be a donor is saying “yes” to life.



## 94 Floors and One Amazing Story

Every year, Steve climbs 94 floors of stairs up to the top of a skyscraper in Chicago, in the name of charity. I do it to honor my donor," he says. It's even more impressive, considering that for many years, he struggled simply to breathe. With perhaps only weeks to live, Steve received a double-lung transplant. A few years later, he learned that his kidneys were failing, and received a kidney from a living donor.

Now Steve encourages everyone to sign up as a donor, as he has. "Wouldn't you like, when you left this beautiful planet, to change a few lives on your way out?" he asks. "It's an incredible gift, and there's no age limit on who can give, and who can't."

## Simple steps to changing lives

How do you sign up to become an organ, eye, and tissue donor after you die? Follow these three steps to designate your wishes.

1. **Go online to [organdonor.gov](http://organdonor.gov).** Choose your state from the drop down menu to find specific information on how to register to become a donor. Requirements differ for each state, so it's important to make sure you follow the instructions carefully.
2. **Designate on your driver's license.** You can also designate your decision on your driver's license when you obtain or renew your license (or photo I.D.). In many states, this will place you on the state's donor registry.
3. **Tell your family.** Be sure to tell your family members so they can support your wishes when the time comes.

- Currently, two-thirds of the individuals waiting for an organ transplant are 50 years old or older.
- In 2014, nearly 3,000 deceased donors were over 50.
- In 2014, about 1,700 living donors were over 50.

*You can make a difference today.* Registering to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor is one of the finest and most unselfish humanitarian actions you can take. Why not take time now to declare your wish to give the gift of life?



[organdonor.gov](http://organdonor.gov)  
1.866.99DONATE (1.866.993.6628)

