

UoN BODY DONOR PROGRAM

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR DONORS



HOW WILL THE UNIVERSITY USE MY BODY?

The University of Newcastle runs anatomical teaching programs for students of medicine and other health sciences. Your body will be used for anatomical examination purposes, including teaching structural and functional anatomy.

CAN I BE AN ORGAN DONOR TOO?

You can register as an organ donor as well as registering with the Body Donor Program. However, for your body to be accepted by the University at time of death, it needs to be intact so that it can be embalmed; we cannot accept bodies from which the organs have been removed. Less than 1% of people die in hospital in the kinds of circumstances which are suitable for organ donation so many people choose to register with both programs.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS AFTER DEATH?

In the event of your death, staff at the Body Donor Program should be contacted immediately. We will ask a series of questions to determine whether or not your body can be accepted (*see section below on circumstances preventing acceptance*). A doctor will also need to attend to determine cause of death and issue a death certificate. After this, if your body is **conditionally accepted** (*see section below on compulsory blood testing*), the University will arrange, and pay for, transportation of your body to our anatomy facility. This will be carried out by a funeral director.

The University will record your death with the NSW Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages (BDM). Your next of kin can obtain a copy of the death certificate from BDM. Please note that it generally takes one to two weeks (from the time of death) to process the legal registration of death with the Registrar.

HOW LONG WILL THE UNIVERSITY KEEP MY BODY?

Under the *Anatomy Act (NSW) 1977* the University is permitted to keep your body for up to four years. We can then apply to the Anatomy Inspector to keep your body for a further four years provided you have recorded no objection to this on your donor form. If you give permission, we are also able to apply to retain parts of your body indefinitely as 'museum specimens' (*see section below re permanent retention*).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE UNIVERSITY HAS FINISHED USING MY BODY?

After we have finished using your body for anatomical examination it is sent for cremation. The University will pay for this. Depending on the preference you select in your registration forms, the ashes will then be either returned to your next of kin or other person nominated by you, or will be scattered as requested.

PERMANENT RETENTION

Sometimes an organ or other parts of your body may have uncommon or unusual anatomical features or may represent the result of disease. At other times we may produce a specifically detailed dissection. These body parts are especially useful for teaching purposes. Provided you consent to this on your registration form, we may seek permission from the Anatomy Inspector to retain these body parts indefinitely as 'museum specimens' so they can be studied for many years. This would allow us to obtain the greatest amount of benefit from body donations.

In the case of permanent retention of body parts, it may become necessary to dispose of remains separately to the rest of your body. Very small amounts will be disposed of as clinical waste. Larger amounts will be sent for cremation with the ashes being scattered.

CIRCUMSTANCES PREVENTING ACCEPTANCE OF REGISTRATION / DONATION

While we make every effort to honour a donor's wishes and accept their donation, there are circumstances in which we have no option but to decline the donor's offer. The following list includes common reasons we may be unable to accept either your registration with the program or your donation at time of death.

- **Location.** The donor must reside within our catchment area and also be within the catchment area at time of death. This is to ensure we are able to transfer the body to our facility within an appropriate timeframe for embalming to commence before tissue deterioration occurs.
- **Late notification of death.** We must be able to transfer the body to a coolroom facility within 6-8 hours of death (or potentially earlier than this during warmer months), and to our facility no later than 14 hours after death.
- **Staff availability / holiday closure.** Specialised staff are needed to embalm the body and at times if staff availability is limited we may not be able to accept new donor bodies. The donor program is closed over Christmas and Easter periods. Exact closure dates will vary each year according to staff availability; please contact us if you would like to check the closure dates in any given year.
- **Facility at capacity.** At times, we may suspend acceptance of donor bodies. This would be dependent on the needs of the program. If the body is suitable, and if the donor has indicated willingness in the Permissions section of Form 1, we may be able to advise the Next of Kin of another donor program in NSW to contact. Acceptance would again be dependent on the needs of that program.
- **Obesity or emaciation.** This is to ensure we are able to physically handle the bodies we receive and also prepare high-quality teaching dissections from them.
- **Contagious diseases.** We are unable to accept any donor who at the time of death was suffering from any contagious disease that could pose a risk to staff and students. In the case of hepatitis, we are unable to accept a donor who has ever contracted the disease. A comprehensive (but not exhaustive) list of diseases that preclude acceptance is included on a separate page. *Please also see section below on compulsory blood testing.*
- **Diseases of the central nervous system.** We are unable to accept donors who have Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease (CJD) and all forms of dementia that develop prior to 70 years of age.
- **Donor who spent 6 months or longer in the UK** between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1996 or received a blood transfusion in the UK during this period. This is due to the higher risk of vCJD disease transmission from people who were exposed to beef products in the UK during this period.
- **A recent operation or injury** has left the deceased with a wound that may prevent successful embalming of the body.
- **Severe vascular diseases.** Due to vascular damage, embalming of the body is unlikely to be successful.
- **Coroner's case.** If the deceased is part of a case being investigated by a coroner.
- **Objection by next of kin** after death.

COMPULSORY BLOOD TESTING

The University has an obligation to provide a safe working and teaching environment for staff, students and visitors. For this reason we undertake blood testing to ensure our donors are free of contagious diseases. Donor bodies are **conditionally accepted** to our facility pending the outcome of the blood tests.

We currently test for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. In the event of a positive test result, we will be unable to accept donation of the body. In this case we would liaise with the donor's family who would need to arrange collection of the body by a funeral director and be responsible for funeral arrangements. Please note that we will need to advise the donor's next of kin about the positive test result in order to explain why we are unable to accept the body.

CONTACT DETAILS

Business hours: 4921 5663

After hours: 0408 279 423