

BODY DONOR PROGRAM - INFORMATION SHEET

IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE DONOR CONSENT FORM.

The Department of Anatomy and Physiology at the University of Melbourne (“**the University**”) co-ordinates a Body Donor Program for the purposes of the teaching, study, examination and investigation of human anatomy.

Most of the bodies that have been donated to the program are used in the education and training of future healthcare professionals including medical, dental, physiotherapy, science and nursing students. Some are used for the advanced training of surgeons and other specialists and some contribute to the investigation of human anatomy.

Each donated body is treated with great care and respect and, on completion of our studies, is cremated. Following cremation, relatives who have requested the return of ashes are able to retrieve them for commemorative purposes.

Each year the Department of Anatomy and Physiology holds a Commemorative Thanksgiving Service to honour the donors and their families. It provides staff and students with an opportunity to express their appreciation for the generosity of those who have donated their bodies as well as to offer personal thanks to the donor’s families and friends.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Can anyone become a donor?

Any adult (18 years and over) may **apply** to become a prospective body donor provided that:

- They reside within 40 kilometres of the Melbourne GPO;
- They are not suffering from an infectious disease (eg. HIV, tuberculosis);

Q2: How do I apply?

There are two ways in which you can apply to become a donor:

1. Download the Donor Consent Form from our website:
<https://biomedsciences.unimelb.edu.au/departments/departments-of-anatomy-and-physiology/engage/body-donor-program>
2. Email, telephone, or write to the Body Donor Coordinator requesting a copy of the Donor Consent Form.
- 3.

You will need to complete the Donor Consent Form according to the instructions on the form and mail the original signed copy to the Body Donor Coordinator. The University requires the original signed Donor Consent Form, not a photocopy.

PLEASE NOTE: It is a requirement that you sign the 'Signature of donor' section. Signature of your Power of Attorney, Executor or senior available next of kin on your behalf is not acceptable. It is important that you make your wishes to donate your body clearly known to your family. **Your senior available next of kin will also need to sign the Donor Consent Form. If you have no next of kin your executor in lieu of a living family member is required to sign.**

We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your completed Donor Consent Form. This letter, along with the completed Donor Consent Form you signed, will constitute the formal agreement between you and the University regarding the donation of your body.

Q3: Once I become a donor, is my body automatically accepted at the time of death?

The University appreciates your generous donation, but some circumstances may prevent the acceptance of your body. Where this is the case, the University will contact your executor, administrator, or senior available next of kin so that alternative arrangements may be made.

The University would be unable to accept your body if:

- an autopsy/postmortem examination has been performed.
- death is the result of accident or injury.
- too much time has elapsed before the University is notified of your death.
- at the time of death, you were suffering from an infectious disease (e.g., HIV, tuberculosis).
- at the time of death organs were removed for organ donation.
- recent surgery has been performed.
- death occurs during shutdown periods e.g., 24th December to the 31st January or any other times.
- donor is morbidly obese.
- death occurs more than 40 km from Melbourne GPO.
- at the time of death there are operational limitations (e.g., body storage or preparation limitations, building works or planned University shutdowns).

The University of Melbourne reserves the right to determine acceptance into the Body Donor Program and to decline to accept a body for any reason.

PLEASE NOTE: Only Registered Donors, being donors who have completed the Donor Consent Form and accepted by the University, will be accepted at the time of death.

Q4: Are there any costs involved?

No. The University will pay the cost of transporting your body to the University (provided this is within 40 km of the Melbourne GPO) and the cost of cremation once anatomical examination and study has been completed.

Your family or appointed executors will be responsible for any costs associated with any memorial service should they choose to have one, and for the collection of your ashes from the University's funeral director.

If the circumstances of your death preclude acceptance of your body by the University (see Q3 above), your estate or senior available next of kin will be responsible for making alternative arrangements.

Q5: Who contacts the University when I die?

Usually, the University is notified by your senior available next of kin, but contact can also be made by your medical practitioner or nursing staff. Contact is made by telephoning the 24-hour telephone number, supplied at the time of acceptance.

Q6: What happens to my body?

Your body is transferred to the University by a funeral director. This is organised by the University. At all times your body will be treated with the utmost respect.

Your body will be retained and used by the University of Melbourne's Department of Anatomy and Physiology (and/or an institution referred to in Q8 below) after your death for the purpose of the teaching, study, examination, and investigation of human anatomy. On completion of such teaching and study, your body will be cremated individually and treated with the utmost respect and dignity. Generally, your body will be retained for a period that may extend up to three years but in some instances, the University of Melbourne's Department of Anatomy and Physiology (and/or an institution referred to in Q8 below) may choose to retain body parts or tissue samples indefinitely for teaching purposes, and/or may use unidentifiable images and models of your donated body, body parts or tissue samples in the creation of tools for use in the study and teaching of anatomy, including commercial products.

Q7: Can my family collect my ashes?

If your family would like to collect your ashes upon completion of study, this will need to be documented on the signed Donor Consent Form. Once study is complete and cremation has been attended to, your family will be notified in writing by the University that your ashes are ready for collection.

Your ashes will be available for collection from the University's funeral director for a period of two (2) months. If they are not collected within this time, the University will make arrangements for them to be scattered on the rose bed in the Casuarina Lawn area at Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

If it is the donor's wish that their ashes be scattered by the University, this will need to be documented on the signed Consent form.

Q8: Do the studies take place at Melbourne University?

The University's Body Donor Program is the source of bodies that are donated for anatomical study in Victoria. This means that your body may be used for the study and teaching of anatomy and/or the creation of tools for use in the study and teaching of anatomy (including commercial products) at the University or at other legally designated institutions such as anatomy departments in other Victorian Universities. The use of bodies for anatomical examination in Victoria is governed by the provisions of the *Human Tissue Act 1982* (Vic).

On occasion, and where consented to, a donor may be transferred to an interstate School of Anatomy for the examination and investigation of human anatomy. The relevant legislation of each state is listed below: -

- i. Anatomy Act 1977 (NSW).*
- ii. Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1983 (SA).*
- iii. Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 (Qld).*
- iv. Human Tissue and Transplant Act 1982 (WA).*
- v. Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1978 (ACT).*

Q9: Can I also be an organ donor?

You may be registered as an organ donor and a body donor but if at the time of death organs are removed for organ donation, then the University cannot accept your body.

Q10: Can my family have a funeral or a memorial service?

A traditional funeral is not possible because your body must be transferred promptly to the University. The families of many donors hold a memorial service instead.

The University organises an annual Commemorative Thanksgiving Service to acknowledge donors from the previous year. Invitations are sent to the senior next of kin.

Q11: What if my family does not agree with my wish to donate my body?

If a donor's family has any objection to the donation after death, the University reserves the right to decline acceptance of your body.

Q12: Can I change my mind about donating my body?

You may withdraw your donation at any time, prior to your death, by notifying the Body Donor Coordinator of your decision in writing. We will acknowledge by letter that we have received your request.

For further information on the University's Body Donor Program contact:

Body Donor Coordinator
Department of Anatomy & Physiology
The University of Melbourne
Victoria 3010

Phone: +61 3 8344 5809

Fax: +61 3 9347 5219

Email: anatomy-donors@unimelb.edu.au

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the program, you can contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, The University of Melbourne by phone 8344 2073 or email humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au.