



DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

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.

Each donated body is treated with great care and respect and, on completion of use in the Body Donor Program, is cremated. Following cremation, relatives who have requested the return of ashes are able to retrieve them for commemorative purposes. Alternatively, the Body Donor Program can arrange for the ashes to be scattered at the Eucalypt Lawn Garden, Springvale Crematorium.

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. How does the Body Donor Program use bodies donated to it?

Donated bodies will be used for teaching, study, examination and investigation into and research of human anatomy by the University of Melbourne, other Universities and/or Schools of Anatomy within Australia, and/or other third parties who the University of Melbourne has arrangements with. More particularly donated bodies may be used:

- (a) In the education and training of future healthcare professionals including medical, dental, physiotherapy, science and nursing students;
- (b) For the advanced training of surgeons and other specialists;
- (c) For teaching students and other medical professionals in the use of medical tools, devices and procedures; and
- (d) For investigation and research of human anatomy, which may include the creation and development of tools, medical equipment, technology, or other commercial or medical products by the University of Melbourne or third parties. Where used for these purposes, an application will be considered and approved by an institutional Human Research Ethics Committee to ensure alignment with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)* and BDP Compliance Committee.

These uses may also include the creation of unidentifiable scans, images and models of a donated body, including parts of a donated body or tissue samples.

In all cases, the proposed use will be considered by the BDP Compliance Committee to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements specific to body donation and use of donated bodies, specifically the *Human Tissue Act 1982* (Vic), with additional reference to the *Guidelines for the Governance of Schools of Anatomy in Victoria*

Q2: 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 or have previously suffered from an infectious disease such as Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV.

Q3: 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://biomedicalsciences.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.

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 or scanned copy.

It is important that you retain a copy of the completed signed Donor Consent form and that you also provide a copy to your next of kin (particularly the senior next of kin who signed the consent form) for their retention.

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 record of your consent to donate your body to the University.

Q4: 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 is unable to accept your body for several reasons, including if:

- an autopsy/post-mortem 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, Hepatitis B or C, 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 clinically 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).

However, the University of Melbourne reserves the right to accept or decline a donor body into the Body Donor Program for any reason.

PLEASE NOTE: Only registered donors will be accepted by the University at the time of death. Registered donors are those who have completed a donor consent form and have received confirmation of their acceptance into the program.

Q5: 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 use of your body in the program 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 Q4 above), your estate or senior available next of kin will be responsible for making alternative arrangements.

Q6: 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.

Q7: 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 by the University of Melbourne's Department of Anatomy and Physiology and/or an institution referred to in Q10 below.

On completion, 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 Q9 below) may choose to retain body parts or tissue samples indefinitely for teaching purposes.

Q8: Can the University study the disease I have?

No. Our program enables students to examine and research the structure and complexities of the human body, however, the program is not designed to study or research specific structures.

Q9: Can my family collect my ashes?

If your family would like to collect your ashes, this will need to be documented on the signed Donor Consent Form. Once 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 Eucalypt Lawn Garden at Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Alternatively, 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.

Q10: Do the studies take place at Melbourne University?

Bodies donated to the Body Donor Program are generally held and used on the University of Melbourne premises but may also be used by other designated Schools of Anatomy. From time to time, it is necessary for bodies to be temporarily moved to other locations for access to specialised medical scanning and imaging equipment, and this will only be done with prior approval of the Inspector of Anatomy.

Q11: 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.

Q11: 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.



Q12: 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.

Q13: 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 withdrawal notification. We will thereafter not accept your body into the program. You should also notify your senior next of kin that you have withdrawn your consent.

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 Head of Department of Anatomy and Physiology by email on dap-admin@unimelb.edu.au or by phone on (03) 9035 6704.