

CORNEAL DONATION GUIDANCE – WHAT TO DO AFTER A DEATH

Many people who die in hospital choose to be tissue donors.

Tissue donation is also possible for people who die at home, in a care home or at the hospice.

The common tissue to be donated is the cornea. The Cornea (clear lens part of the eye), also the sclera (white part of the eye) is used in sight restoring transplants in the UK every year.

Even if a person has lived with poor vision, or with a medical condition such as advanced cancer, they can still donate their corneas.

If someone who has expressed a wish to donate their corneas dies at home or in a care home, this is what needs to happen:

- Call NHS Blood and Transplant Services: 0800 432 0559** as soon as is reasonably possible after death.

The call can be made by a family member who is aware of the person's wish to donate and consents to the donation, or by a health care professional on their behalf.

If death occurs in a nursing home, a member of staff should place this call, as soon as possible AFTER the family or next of kin has been informed of the person's death. The staff member must check with the family or NOK that they agree to being contacted by a Specialist Nurse to discuss donation options, as they will be asked to confirm this to NHS Blood and Transplant Services.

The NHS Blood and Transplant Services line is manned between 8am and 8pm. An answerphone takes messages between 8pm and 8am. If you leave your name and contact details they will call you back in the morning.

Corneal donation must take place within 24 hours after death, therefore the family/next of kin will receive a call back from a Specialist Nurse to discuss donation within the following few hours after death (but before 8pm), or the on the following morning.

The family/next of kin will have opportunity to talk through the donation process. They do not need to make a decision about donation straight away.
- The nominated family member/friend/NOK will receive a call back** from a Specialist Nurse from NHS Blood and Transplant Services.

The nurse will discuss donation options with the nominated family member/next of kin and take consent for donation by phone.

Only tissue that the family/NOK have consented to will be retrieved.

The family/NOK will be asked for information about the person's personal, medical and travel history to ensure that donation can proceed safely.

The family/NOK should expect the call to last about 20 minutes.
- Retrieval:** A Specialist retrieval team from NHS Blood and Transplant Services undertakes retrieval 7 days a week including Bank Holidays and will arrange a suitable time with you to undertake the retrieval. It will need to be done within 24 hours after death.

Do note that death must have been verified by a doctor or other verification trained professional before the retrieval can take place.

Corneal retrieval can take place at the person's, nursing home, the funeral parlour, or at the hospice if the person was a hospice inpatient.
- Care after retrieval.** The retrieval will not delay any funeral proceedings.

When tissue is removed for donation, the body is sensitively reconstructed to maintain normal anatomical appearance. The family can view their relative as normal following donation. The retrieval process and any reconstruction will be discussed with the family at time of consent.
- What happens to the tissue donated.** NHS Blood and Transplant Services will ask the family if they would like to be informed about the outcome of donation, i.e. if they would like to receive a letter when the tissue has been transplanted. The family will also be offered a gold pin badge and certificate from the Order of St John in recognition of their generous gift.

If there are any queries regarding the above please contact the Saint Francis Hospice community Advice Line, on 01708 758 643, and speak to a member of our team. The Advice Line is a 24hr – 7 day a week phone line service.

To Speak to a NHSBT Specialist Nurse directly. Phone the NHSBT National Referral Centre on 0800 432 0559 between the hours of 8am and 8pm 7 days a week

With kind regards,



Dr Corinna Midgley
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