

BODY DONATION PROGRAM

INFORMATION ON LEAVING YOUR BODY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Rady Faculty of
Health Sciences

umanitoba.ca/medicine/anatomy

THE BODY DONATION PROGRAM

Would you like to serve the community after your death by donating your body for health-science education?

Learning more about the University of Manitoba's Body Donation Program will help you decide whether leaving your body for the purpose of teaching and learning is a good choice for you and your loved ones.

The Body Donation Program was started in 1936 by the Faculty of Medicine. In 1952, Dr. I.M. Thompson established a memorial service as part of the program, making the University of Manitoba medical school the first in Canada to publicly commemorate the burial of persons who have donated their bodies.

An increasing number of people are making arrangements to leave their bodies for anatomical study. Many make this choice as a hopeful gesture of giving, a contribution to scientific knowledge and a way to be of service to their fellow Manitobans.

As the demand for physicians and other health professionals grows, there is an increasing need for donated bodies for the teaching of human anatomy to medical, dental, rehabilitation sciences, pharmacy, physician assistant and graduate students.

DONATING YOUR BODY

REGISTRATION

You may leave your body for anatomical study by completing one original copy of the Body Donation Program Registration Form. Return the original to the department and give a copy to your preferred claimant (spouse, common-law partner, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, executor, lawyer or any other person legally entitled to claim the body after death).

Note that the "Statement of Desire" section on the Registration Form is not legally binding because legislation has not been enacted in this province giving persons the legal right to donate their bodies. In common law your body is not part of your estate; therefore, you have no legal right to bequeath it. The legal power to determine the disposal of your body rests with your next-of-kin, the executor named in your will, or the person lawfully in charge of your body at the time of death.

Please note that the department will not make a decision on acceptance of the body donation until the actual time of death. Therefore, please make sure you have alternate arrangements in place in the event that your body is not accepted into the Body Donation Program.

SEEK CONSENT

Talk to your family about your wish, preferably while you are in good health. Seek their understanding and cooperation. If your next-of-kin or any member of your immediate family strongly disapproves of the idea, you are advised not to pursue it further. If your next-of-kin will not complete the "Waiver of Claim" section on the Registration Form, you are strongly urged to abandon the idea.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The next-of-kin should inform the hospital/personal care home staff (if applicable) immediately about the assignment of the body and should give clear instructions that the body is to be neither autopsied nor embalmed.

Contact the University of Manitoba Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science at 204-789-3652 in order to determine acceptability.

Although virtual-reality methods are emerging for studying anatomy, the best way for students to obtain first-hand experience of the structure and functions of the human body continues to be through study of the deceased. Anatomical education is increasingly important for medical professionals in preparation for specialized surgical skills and advanced procedures in surgery or emergency medicine.

Students preparing for the health professions are fully aware of the special privilege granted to them by law and their obligation to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner when they study deceased persons. The anatomical specimens are respectfully referred to as "silent teachers" and are accorded the dignity and respect that society customarily grants to the deceased.

Many faculty, staff, students and health professionals join body donors' families at the yearly memorial service to pay last respects to those who have made a special contribution to health-science education. The university protects the privacy and dignity of all donated bodies.

The names of accepted donors for anatomical study are recorded in a Book of Remembrance that is displayed in the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science in the Max Rady College of Medicine.

Note that normal office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Should death occur outside of these hours, a voice message should be left indicating your name and phone number, and the deceased's name and location.

Following death, the deceased needs to be placed in proper refrigeration within eight hours. If proper refrigeration is not available at the place of death, please call Winnipeg Funeral Transfer Service at 204-956-2882 or toll free 1-877-956-2882 to arrange for transportation to their facility. *Please note that the transfer service does not make the decision on acceptance of a donor.* The university appreciates all who are willing to donate, however, we reserve the right to refuse any body. In the event that the body cannot be accepted, the next-of-kin or executor is responsible for making alternate arrangements.

ACCEPTED BODY DONATIONS

Accepted bodies can remain in the program for up to four years after death. The duration that the bodies are kept varies depending on the teaching needs of the department.

WHEN STUDIES ARE COMPLETE

Each donor is individually cremated following completion of studies. Your next-of-kin has the option of interring your ashes at Brookside Cemetery in the Medical Section or claiming your ashes for a private burial at private expense.

Each year, the university arranges an interment service for the donors whose studies are complete (usually held in late June). The expenses for this interment service are paid for by the university.

The Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science preserves the memory of each donor by inscribing their name in the Book of Remembrance, which is on display in the department. A memorial monument is also located at Brookside Cemetery to recognize the significant gift that all donors make when their bodies are entrusted to the university.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will I automatically be accepted into the Body Donation Program when I die?

No. The University of Manitoba greatly appreciates everyone who is willing to donate their body, however, we reserve the right to refuse any body if unacceptable for anatomical studies. The decision of acceptance into the program is not determined until the actual time of death. Therefore, you should also make your next-of-kin aware of alternate arrangements should you not be accepted.

What circumstances might cause my body to not be accepted, even if I have signed up for the Body Donation Program?

We undertake an extensive embalming process, which far exceeds that performed by funeral homes. We do this to ensure that we can continue to use the body for teaching over an extended period of up to four years. As a result, the condition of the body at the time of death, your medical history leading up to the death, and previous case histories are all important considerations in deciding whether a donation is accepted.

Some examples of specific conditions that would make a donation unacceptable are:

- Autopsy or Medical Examiners cases
- Death has occurred outside the 322 km radius of Winnipeg
- Infectious or contagious diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS, hepatitis [any type], sepsis, tuberculosis, shingles)
- Severe antibiotic-resistant infections (e.g. MRSA, VRE, ESBL)
- Extensive trauma to the body (including recent major surgery)
- Increased or decreased Body Mass Index (BMI) as determined by the department (i.e. overweight or underweight)
- Extensive abdominal or pelvic surgery
- Excessive edema (swelling)
- Extensive cancer (as determined by the department)
- Major amputations or deformities
- Organ/tissue removal (with the exception of Lions Eye Bank donations)
- Natural deterioration of the body; where more than 72 hours have passed post-death, even if the body has been refrigerated
- Deterioration of the body; where more than eight hours have passed if a body has not been refrigerated
- Delay of notification of death
- Family disagrees with donation
- Severe burn or tissue damage
- Bodies of infants and children are unacceptable (anyone under age 18)

I have a rare condition/disease. If accepted into the Body Donation Program, will my family get a report on the cause/nature of my illness?

The primary focus of the Body Donation Program is teaching the structure and function of the human body and as such, we are unable to provide that type of service. Medical histories of the donors remain confidential throughout their time in the program.



Is there an age restriction?

Anyone over the age of 18 years is eligible to donate their body. There is no maximum age. We do not accept donors under the age of 18.

Can next-of-kin or an executor authorize donation of a deceased person who has not previously registered to the Body Donation Program?

Yes, any person who legally has custody of your body and is over the age of 18 years may make the donation. However, it is preferred to have the donor's signed consent on file indicating their willingness to participate in our program.

Can I change my mind regarding donation of my body?

Yes, you may change your mind about donating your body at any time. Please let your next-of-kin know of your final decision. We also ask that you inform the Body Donation Program in writing to remove your assignment forms from the program.

What expenses, if any, are involved upon the death of a donor?

The expenses incurred in transporting the body to the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science, up to a maximum of \$75 will be borne by the university, as will the expenses for cremation and interment of the cremated remains in the Medical Section at Brookside Cemetery. Cost for transportation beyond the \$75 limit will be the responsibility of the family, next-of-kin or executor of the deceased.

Should death occur outside of Winnipeg, family/next-of-kin will be charged \$1.50* per kilometer (round trip) for transportation of the deceased to Winnipeg. *subject to change without notice

What is the difference between whole body donation and organ or tissue donation?

Whole body donation is when you give your body to health-science education for teaching purposes. Organ and tissue donation is when you give your organs and/or tissues for transplantation into someone who needs them.



If I am registered as an organ or tissue donor, can I also register for the Body Donation Program?

Yes. It is acceptable to register with Transplant Manitoba and/or Tissue Bank Manitoba in addition to the Body Donation Program. However, in the event of organ and/or tissue removal for transplant (with the exception of Lions Eye Bank donations), body donation to our program is not possible. If you are declined as an organ/tissue donor, body donation may be considered as an alternative.

When will we find out if a donation is accepted?

The decision of acceptance into the program is not determined until the actual time of death. Upon death, a decision will be made after discussion about the deceased's medical history with the deceased's caregivers and/or next-of-kin.

What is done with my body after studies have been completed?

Each donor is cremated individually and the remains are placed into individual urns.

For further information please contact the Body Donation Program:

Body Donation Program
Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science
Max Rady College of Medicine, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences
130 - 745 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3E 0J9
T: 204-789-3652 | F: 204-789-3920
Service_After_Death@umanitoba.ca

umanitoba.ca/medicine/anatomy

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