

Frequently Asked Questions

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Who can make a donation?

Anyone over age 18 is eligible to become a donor to our Anatomical Gift Program. All you need to do is sign the [Anatomical Gift Pledge form](#) (available to print from this website or, if requested, will be mailed to you) in the presence of one witness and send it to:

SUNY Upstate Medical University
Department of Cell and Developmental Biology
750 East Adams Street
Syracuse, New York 13210.

If, as next-of-kin, you wish to donate on behalf of a dying or just deceased relative, please call us at (315) 464-4348 for more information regarding this procedure.

Are there any age limits regarding who is eligible to donate?

We will accept the donation of any individual 18 years of age and older. There is no upper age limit for donations.

May I donate even if I have had an organ removed by surgery or lost a limb?

Yes. We would be pleased to accept such a donation.

May I donate my body and also donate my organs to an organ bank for transplantation or research purposes?

A person may donate his or her eyes and/or brain, and initiate a whole body donation to our program. However, the removal of other internal organs to be used for transplant, such as kidneys, heart, and lungs requires extensive surgery and generally means that the body will not be acceptable for donation. If organs are not suitable for transplant, the body could be donated to us for anatomical study.

To obtain information for eye or tissue donation, please contact:
The Central New York Eye and Tissue Bank and Research Corporation
517 E. Washington St.
Syracuse, NY 13202
or call 315-476-0199.

To obtain information about organ donation, please contact:
The Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network
Madison Irving Medical Center
475 Irving Ave, Suite 102, Syracuse, NY 13210
or call 315-428-8500.

Are there conditions under which a prospective donation will not be accepted?

The Anatomical Gift Program reserves the right not to accept a prospective donation if, in the professional judgement of the program's technical director, such donation is not suitable to accomplish the aims and goals of the program. The conditions under which a prospective donation will not be suitable for health education purposes include, but are not limited to, an individual who:

- is excessively obese.
- has an active communicable disease or is infected with contagious organisms such as HIV, viral hepatitis or

tuberculosis.

- is a carrier of contagious organisms such as HIV, viral hepatitis or tuberculosis.
- is not delivered to the Anatomical Gift Program within the required 48 hours from death.
- has a condition that presents health risks to the program staff and/or health profession students.
- is under 18 years of age.

I thought the methods used to preserve a body killed all microorganisms. Why, then, will the program not accept a donation from someone that has or is a carrier of contagious organisms?

Infectious/contagious organisms that are responsible for diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis or tuberculosis pose a serious safety hazard to anyone who comes in contact with them. There is a lack of good evidence demonstrating that the methods used to preserve bodies will inactivate (kill) these organisms. To reduce the risk that any of our staff or students might contract any of the above diseases, we will not accept donations from anyone who has an active infection or is thought to be a carrier. *If a pledge/prospective donor contracts any of the above communicable diseases, please alert the Anatomical Gift Program so that we can remove the donor from our list.*

What if I change my mind?

A pledge may be withdrawn at any time prior to death. A written statement to that effect is requested so that we may change our records.

Should I inform my relatives of my wish?

As a registered donor to the Anatomical Gift Program, you should inform your family about your decision to donate your body; in particular, your next of kin. We encourage you to make your decision known to relatives, close friends, minister, and attorney.

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

Signing the Anatomical Gift Consent form constitutes a legal document and can only be revoked by the donor. However, if you anticipate or expect your family not to agree, call our office (315-464-4348) for information on appointing an agent that can carry out your wishes.

How will donation of my body benefit the education of health professionals?

Bodies donated to Upstate's Anatomical Gift Program will be used primarily for the teaching of anatomy. Health professionals from first year medical, physical therapy and physician assistant students to residents and faculty at the Upstate Medical University benefit greatly from the opportunity to engage in active, hands-on learning about the intricacies of the human body.

Donations made to the Anatomical Gift Program are the responsibility of Upstate Medical University. The program will take every step to assure that the donation is used in a respectful manner.

Donations may be provided for use by an institution of higher education in New York State in which gross anatomy is an integral and required component of an accredited program to educate health professionals, provided the institution is licensed by the New York State Department of Health as a whole body user.

May I designate a particular purpose for the use of my body?

You may note your preference on the donor form, and we will make every effort to honor it, but we can accept a body only as an *unrestricted anatomical gift* since research and educational needs vary from year to year.

What steps should be taken to release my body to the SUNY Upstate Medical University upon my death?

The person responsible for making the arrangements to donate the body of the deceased should contact the Anatomical Gift Program (315-464-4348) promptly to determine if the donation can be accepted. The program requires that the donation be delivered to our facility no longer than 48 hours after death. A licensed funeral home is required by law to arrange the transportation of a deceased person.

Will the donation be affected if an autopsy is performed?

A body which has been autopsied or is subject to a medical examiner's request for autopsy generally cannot be accepted for donation. However, the Anatomical Gift Program will review individual cases for exceptions.

What about viewing or funeral services?

To accomplish the objectives of our program, it is imperative that the donation be delivered to our facility within 48 hours after death. We will not accept any donation that has been embalmed prior to delivery to our facility. We recognize this means the body will not be present should the family want to have calling hours or a funeral service. Such activities would make it difficult to utilize the donation for our stated purposes.

What happens if I die some distance away from my home or SUNY Upstate Medical University?

If the distance makes transporting the body impractical, a representative of the Anatomical Gift Program will provide a list of medical schools that may accept the donation geographically closer to the place of death.

What happens to my remains?

Upon completion of our studies, the remains will be cremated at the expense of SUNY Upstate Medical University at a New York State licensed crematory. If requested, the cremains of the donor will be returned to a person or funeral home as designated by the donor or his/her agent.

Will all my remains be returned?

There may be an occasion when the donation provides a unique educational opportunity for our students. On such occasions, the Anatomical Gift Program at SUNY Upstate Medical University reserves the right to retain a portion of the donation for archival purposes in order to provide unique teaching opportunities for our future students. Archiving of such specimens will be conducted and retained only at Upstate Medical University and no other institution.

When will the cremains be returned?

The time frame varies with each donation. The maximum time a donation is kept is two years. Many donations are kept for a much shorter period of time. Shortly before the cremains are returned via certified mail, a letter is sent to the designated recipient of the cremains. If the designated person responsible for your remains moves, he or she should notify our department of the new address. If there has been a change in the designee, the new person's name and address should be provided to the Anatomical Gift Program. Please be sure to notify our office if there is a need to have the cremains returned prior to the two-year period.

Will a report of finding concerning the probable cause of death be provided to the person responsible for my remains?

Only a licensed pathologist is qualified to provide information regarding cause of death. Therefore the Anatomical Gift Programs personnel are not able to provide this information.
