

National Minority Donor Awareness Month

National Minority Donor Awareness Month brings attention to the need for more organ donors within all minority communities. Originally established in 1996 as a weeklong observance during the first week of August, it was recently expanded to include the entire month of August. National Minority Donor Awareness Month brings together national and state organizations to highlight the need for more ethnically diverse donors using educational outreach, the promotion of healthy living and disease prevention to lessen the need for transplants, and by encouraging donor registration.

Individuals in African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native communities make up nearly 60 percent of the national transplant waiting list of more than 100,000 in this country; however, the number of donors within these communities is relatively small. Nationally, the number of minority donors is about 30 percent of the number of recipients. In the Hispanic community, the number of donors is slightly better—40 percent of the number of recipients. And while transplants are, many times, successful between ethnicities, sometimes the long-term success of a transplant can be better within a common genetic background. Generally speaking, a more diverse donor pool may help shorten the waiting list for everyone.

Many diseases and chronic health conditions lead to the need for transplants specifically in multi-cultural communities. Conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension and chronic liver disease affect the kidneys, heart, liver and pancreas. The most needed transplant among those waiting is a kidney, for which there is a nearly 5-year wait.

A single organ donor can provide lifesaving organ transplants to eight individuals. Organs that can be transplanted include the heart, two lungs, two kidneys, pancreas, liver and small intestines. A single tissue donor can provide life-enhancing tissue transplants to dozens of individuals. Tissue transplants include corneas that restore sight, bones, veins, ligaments, tendons and skin. Each year more than 85,000 corneas are donated nationally. And nearly 2 million tissue transplants made life better for individuals last year.

What can you do to help increase the number of organs available for transplant?

It's easy. Register as an organ/tissue donor today. If you are over the age of 16, visit www.LifeGoesOn.com to register your decision without leaving home. It only takes 30 seconds.

Learn the Facts

- *Registering to be a donor will not affect the care you receive in a medical emergency situation.* Lifesaving doctors are only concerned about saving lives. That is their only job. Additionally, they do not have access to the donor registry.
- *All major eastern and western religions support, and many times encourage, donation and transplantation.* Faith leaders agree that if you have the ability to alleviate human suffering through donation, you should try.
- *Rich and famous people do not receive transplants before others.* A national database matches organs from donors with people waiting based on illness, blood type, tissue type, geographical location and time on the waiting list. Income, fame, race or celebrity status are never considered.
- *A donor can have an open casket at a funeral.* The removal of organs is a respectful, surgical procedure with the body carefully restored afterward. There are no visible signs of donation.
- *You are never too old to donate.* There have been individuals who have donated organs well into their 80s. But older individuals are, many times, very successful tissue donors.
- *The donor family is never charged for the removal of their loved organs.* Organs are considered gifts and are given to those in critical need.

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