

Organ donation and your religion

Most religions support organ and tissue donation as an act of charity and goodwill.

People from all walks of life depend on organ and tissue donations, regardless of race, origin, religion or language. Allocations are made on the basis of the severity of the recipient's illness, the time spent on official waiting lists, and the availability of suitable blood and tissue matches.

The table below provides an overview of the position of many religions regarding organ and tissue donation and transplantation. For more information about your religion and organ donation or tissue donation, please speak to your religious or spiritual advisor.

| Religion | Donation | Transplantation | Discussion |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|---|
| Amish | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Amish consent to transplantation on the basis that it is for the well-being of the transplant recipient. The Amish are reluctant however to donate their organs if transplant outcomes are uncertain. |
| Anglican | Acceptable | Acceptable | The offering of life to and for others reflects the Christian principle of interdependence within the human community. Anglicans emphasise the importance of the role of hospital Chaplains in providing spiritual and human support throughout the organ transplant process. |
| Baha'i Faith | Acceptable | Acceptable | There is nothing in the Baha'i teaching which forbids donation. The guardian of the Baha'i faith has stated, "...it seems a noble thing to do." |
| Baptist | Acceptable | Acceptable | Organ donation is encouraged and supported as it is seen as an act of charity. The Church however, leaves the decision to donate up to the individual. |
| Brethren | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Church of the Annual Conference in 1993 developed a resolution supporting and encouraging organ and tissue donation: "We have the opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs and tissues." |
| Buddhism | Acceptable | Acceptable | Buddhists believe that organ and tissue donation is a matter of individual conscience and place high value on acts of compassion. |
| Catholic Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | "The act of love which is expressed with the gift on one's vital organs remains a genuine testimony of charity that is able to look beyond death so that life always wins." His Holiness Benedict XVI (7 November 2008) |



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| Christian Scientists | Acceptable | Acceptable | Christian Scientists rely on spiritual instead of medical means of healing. However, they are free to choose whatever medical form of treatment they desire – including transplantation. Organ and tissue donation is an individual decision. |
| Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' | Acceptable | Acceptable | The decision to donate is an individual one made in conjunction with family, medical personnel and prayer. |
| Episcopal | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Episcopal Church passed a resolution in 1982 that recognises the life-giving benefits of organ, blood and tissue donation. Church members are encouraged to become organ, blood and tissue donors. |
| Greek Orthodox Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Greek Orthodox Church has no objection, whether doctrinal or moral, to the transplantation of organs on medical advice. The reception and donation of organs for this purpose reveals a profound act of loving solidarity and sacrifice among people. |
| Romani | Generally opposed | Generally opposed | Romani people believe that for one year after a person dies, the soul retraces its steps. All of the parts of the body must be intact because the soul maintains a physical shape. |
| Hinduism | Acceptable | Acceptable | Hindus believe the soul is immortal and is reborn in new physical forms. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that part of the dead human body, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans. |
| Islam | Acceptable | Acceptable | In 1983, the Moslem Religious Council initially rejected organ donation by followers of Islam, but it has reversed its position, provided donors consent in writing prior to death. The organs of Moslem donors must be transplanted immediately. Islam strongly believes in the principle of saving human life. Many schools of Islamic Law have invoked the principle of priority of saving lives and have permitted organ transplant as a way to achieve that. |
| Jehovah's Witness | Acceptable | Acceptable | Agreeing to an organ transplant or organ donation is a personal decision. All organs and tissues, however, must be completely drained of blood before transplantation. |

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| Judaism | Acceptable | Acceptable | All four branches of Judaism support and encourage donation. Both the Reform and Conservative movements also have policy statements strongly supporting donation. |
| Lutheran Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Lutheran Church believes that the decision to donate one's organs and/or tissues should be left up to the individual. |
| Maori | Acceptable | Acceptable | The most important consideration is that full discussion and consultation be carried out with the family and members of their land. |
| Pentecostal | Acceptable | Acceptable | Pentecostals believe that the decision to donate one's organs and tissues should be left up to the individual. |
| Presbyterian Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | Presbyterians encourage and support donation. They respect a person's right to make decisions regarding their own body. |
| Reformed Church of Australia | Acceptable except in dependant minors | Acceptable | The Reformed Church of Australia has no biblical or principle objection to donation and transplantation for therapeutic purposes. |
| Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) believes it is essential that the rights of all individuals are respected and that free and informed consent be obtained from the next of kin. They believe the giving of human organs makes possible a richer life and alleviation of suffering of others. |
| Seventh Day Adventist Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | Although transplant procedures are carried out at many Seventh Day Adventist health care institutions around the world, the church has made no formal declaration regarding organ donation and transplantation. |
| Shinto | Not acceptable | Acceptable to some | In Shinto, the dead body is considered to be impure and dangerous, and thus quite powerful. It is difficult to obtain consent from bereaved families for organ donation, and may be regarded as causing an injury to the dead body. |

All major religions support organ and tissue donation

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| Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of Victoria) | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of Victoria) recommends that members be encouraged to volunteer as organ donors and that those who are willing to do this take appropriate action to make their wishes known. They say that most importantly people need to have frank and specific discussions within the family, so that other members of the family, specifically next of kin, understand the wishes of the person. |
| Wesleyan Church | Acceptable | Acceptable | The Wesleyan Church supports donation as a way of helping others. They believe that God's "ability to resurrect us is not dependent on whether or not all our parts were connected at death." |

Sourced from: SEOPF/UNOS (2000) Organ and Tissue Donation: A Reference Guide for Clergy. Cooper ML, Taylor GJ, (eds) 4th ed. SEOPF/UNOS, Richmond, VA.

For more information visit www.donatelife.gov.au

Make sure you and your loved ones discuss your wish to be an organ donor. Some 2000 Australians waiting for donor organs wish you would.

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An Australian Government Initiative