

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Palliative Care Services
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WD85-1150 © March 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed March 2028 or sooner, if needed.
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>

Cornea Donation

Palliative Care Service

Cornea Donation

- Every year, hundreds of people are helped by cornea transplants. This transplant can:
 - › bring back a person’s sight.
 - › relieve pain in people who have certain eye diseases.
 - › give people a better quality of life.
- The cornea is a clear, round tissue that lets light enter the front of the eye. It looks like a contact lens.
- If the cornea gets damaged, it can block light from coming into the eye. You need a healthy cornea to see well.
- Since there are not enough corneas to meet the need, there are many people waiting to have a transplant.
- **Palliative care patients may be able to donate their corneas.**
- Choosing to donate your corneas may help to support and comfort you, your family, and your loved ones as you grieve.

The gift of sight

“For the first time in over 5 years, I could see across the room without any visual correction.

I spent the drive home crying, watching the world through this new eye, thankful for a new life that this donor had graciously given me.

Not a day has gone by since May 2003 that I have not celebrated my life or my vision to the fullest. In each sunrise or sunset, rainstorm or rainbow, in each frown or in each smile, I see everything and recognize what a great world we are in and how very fortunate I am to be able to see it. I am forever grateful for my donor and donor family, for the support of my friends and family throughout my recovery and in the months ahead.”

If you would like to donate your corneas:

- Talk with your health care team.
- or
- Call the **Regional Tissue Bank:**
 - › Phone: 902-473-7360
 - › Phone (toll-free): 1-800-314-6515

Will my family know what happens to my donated corneas?

- Yes. Your family will get a letter from the Transplant Program with general information. For confidentiality (privacy), we do not share:
 - › Your name
 - › Your family's name
 - › The name of the person who got the donated cornea(s)

The legacy of cornea donation

Ross's story (January 2014)

"I am the recipient of 2 donated corneas. I had my first transplant surgery (left eye) in June 2012 and my second transplant surgery in June 2013. 7 years ago I was diagnosed with Fuchs' Corneal Dystrophy. Fuchs' is a degenerative disease of the cornea that affects both eyes. It started out as cloudy vision in the mornings and eventually led to a loss of vision, like looking through wax paper. There is no cure for Fuchs', the only treatment is a cornea transplant.

I'm a husband, a father of 3, a business owner, a sailor, and a musician. I lead a very active life. Not being able to see proved increasingly difficult to do the things I needed and wanted to do. The gift that was given to me has given me a large part of my life back and my promise is that I will never waste one moment of my life."

To learn more about organ and tissue donation, visit:

Legacy of Life

- › www.legacyoflife.ns.ca

Scan the QR code below on your device (open the camera on your device, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)



It is very important to share your wishes about donation with your family, so they can support the donation process.

Common questions

Is there a cost to donate my corneas?

- There is no cost to you or your family.

Will I be able to have a funeral or an open casket?

- **Corneas are taken out shortly after death.**

You can choose to have any type of funeral, including an open casket.

Will donation slow down my funeral plans?

- We make every effort to avoid slowing down your funeral plans. Your body will be released to your family or to the funeral home as soon as your corneas are removed. This is usually within 24 hours (1 day).

Who can donate their corneas?

- You can donate your corneas:
 - › if you are 79 years old or younger.
 - › even if you wear glasses.
- Your health care provider will work with you to find out if you can donate.

It is up to you whether you choose to donate.

- After your death, we will check your health history to find out if you can donate your corneas. You may not be able to donate if you have certain conditions (like certain blood cancers, diseases, and infections).

Can I change my mind after I have chosen to donate?

- **Yes, you can change your mind at any time.** This is a very personal decision. It needs to be the right choice for you.
- If you want to change your registered donation decision, you must update your information with the Health Card Registry.
- **If it is time for you to renew your provincial health card**, you can use the *Health Card Renewal Form* mailed to you.
- **If it is not time for you to renew your provincial health card**, you can contact MSI Registration and Enquiry:
 - › Phone: 902-496-7008
 - › <https://beta.novascotia.ca/request-opt-out-organ-and-tissue-donation>

