



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Tissue Transplant



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## What are human tissues for transplant?

Human tissues for transplant come from tissue donors. The tissues go through many steps and safety tests before they are ready for transplant.

Some types of donor tissues are corneas, sclera, skin, bone, tendon, fascia, meniscus, and heart valves:

- Corneas (clear front of the eye) help patients who have lost their sight due to disease or damage.
- Sclera (the white part of the eye) grafts can treat eye injuries and cancers.
- Skin grafts can treat severe burns, helping to save the life of a burn patient.
- Bone grafts are used in hip, cancer, and some dental surgeries.
- Tendon (joins muscle to bone) grafts are used in ligament repairs.
- Fascia (connective tissue) can be used in spinal surgeries and to help repair the bladder.
- Meniscus (part of the knee) grafts can replace damaged ones.
- Heart valves are life saving and can replace damaged or diseased valves.

## **Where do tissues for transplant come from?**

These tissues come from people who have died. They, or their family, have decided to proceed with tissue donation. Donors are carefully screened to make sure they are able to donate.

## **What are donor tissues screened for?**

Blood tests are performed on the donor to check for diseases that could be passed on at the time of transplant if present. These tests must be performed under federal law. These include tests for:

- › HIV
- › Hepatitis B and C
- › Syphilis
- › West Nile Virus

## **Are human tissues for transplant safe?**

Human tissues for transplant are very safe. All tissues transplanted in Canada come from tissue banks that are federally licensed by Health Canada. This means that the tissue banks providing human tissues for transplant meet very strict safety standards.

Each tissue comes from a single donor and has a unique donor identification code. Tissue banks keep track of who receives each tissue in case there is ever a need to notify a patient of a problem with their tissue transplant.

## **What are the risks?**

As with any medical procedure, there are risks that come with getting a tissue transplant. While the chance of these things happening is very low, be sure to talk to your health care provider or doctor if you have any questions.

## **What is informed consent?**

Before you receive a tissue transplant, or any surgery, your doctor will talk with you about the risks and benefits. Your doctor will then ask for your permission.

**Always ask questions if there is any part of your treatment you do not understand.**

## **It is decided that I will have a tissue transplant. Now what?**

You've decided to have surgery that involves having a transplant of donor tissue. It is possible to have an unexpected complication after surgery. You should talk about any concerns with your primary health care provider or transplant surgeon.

## **What can I expect after surgery?**

You should talk about the surgery with your surgeon. They are best able to help you understand what happens during and after your surgery what to expect regarding pain and swelling, and when you can go back to your usual activities.

## **What should I do if I think I am having a problem related to my surgery?**

- Call your primary health care provider's office right away. Tell your health care provider about your symptoms. They will be able to tell you what to do.
- If you can't get a hold of your primary health care provider, call your surgeon's office. Explain your symptoms. They may tell you to come to their office or go to the Emergency Department right away.
- If you start having symptoms at night, go to the Emergency Department right away. Sometimes a complication can get worse very fast.

