

# Tissue Transplant



NB Organ and Tissue Program  
Le Programme d'organes et de tissus du N-B  
ORGAN • TISSUE • OCULAR    ORGANES • TISSUS • OCULAIRE



IWK Health



# Tissue Transplant

## What is a tissue transplant?

You may receive transplanted tissue as part of your surgery. Human tissues for transplant are called allografts. They come from tissue donors.

## What types of tissue can be transplanted?

- **Cornea** (the clear, front layer of the eye): A damaged cornea can be replaced with a healthy cornea to restore sight.
- **Sclera** (the white part of the eye): This can be used to treat eye injuries, cancers, and glaucoma.
- **Amniotic membrane** (layer of tissue in the placenta): This is used in eye surgeries and on people with burns.
- **Skin**: Paper-thin layers of skin can be used to treat severe (very bad) burns.
- **Bone**: This is used in orthopedic and cancer surgeries, and to prevent amputations (removing a limb).
- **Tendon** (joins muscle to bone): These are used to repair ligaments, like the ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in the knee.
- **Fascia** (connective tissue): This can be used in spinal or bladder surgeries, like adding bladder support.

- **Meniscus** (part of the knee): A healthy meniscus can replace a torn and damaged meniscus.
- **Heart valve**: This can replace a damaged or diseased valve.

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

Tissues come from tissue donors who have died.

## **What are tissue donors screened for?**

Tissue donors are screened to make sure they are able to donate. The donor's blood is tested to make sure there are no diseases that could be passed on to a recipient (person receiving the donor tissue). These tests must be done under federal law. They include:

- › 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 registered with Health Canada. This means that the tissue banks meet very strict safety regulations and standards.
- Tissue banks keep track of who receives each tissue using a unique donor identification (ID) code.

## **What are the risks of tissue transplant?**

As with any medical procedure, there are some risks. These include disease or infection. While the chance of this is very low, be sure to talk with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or transplant surgeon if you have any questions.

## **What is informed consent?**

Before you receive a tissue transplant, your transplant surgeon will talk with you about the risks and benefits. Then, they will ask for your permission to do the transplant.

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

## What can I expect after tissue transplant surgery?

Talk with your transplant surgeon about what to expect after surgery. They can help you understand:

- › what will happen during and after your surgery.
- › what pain and swelling to expect.
- › when you can go back to your usual activities.

**Remember:** Many of the symptoms you have after surgery are common and are not caused by your transplant. Signs of an unexpected complication may include pain that gets worse instead of better or a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F).

### **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.
- If you cannot talk with your primary health care provider, call your surgeon's office. They may tell you to come to their office or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.
- **If you start having symptoms at night, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.** Sometimes a complication can get worse very fast.

## **Can I find out more about my tissue donor?**

Information about your tissue donor is confidential. This means it cannot be shared. As a recipient, your personal information is also kept confidential.

## **Can I thank my donor family?**

You can offer your thoughts and thanks to your tissue donor's family if you wish. You may choose to do this in a letter or a card. Your letter or card is anonymous (it will not include any information that may identify you).

If you would like to communicate with your donor's family, ask your transplant surgeon for contact information for the tissue bank that provided the tissue.

## **If you have questions about tissue donation:**

### **New Brunswick:**

NB Organ and Tissue Program

- › [www.HorizonNB.ca/Organ-Tissue](http://www.HorizonNB.ca/Organ-Tissue)
- › Phone: 506-632-5541 (cornea donation)
- › Phone: 506-870-2556 (tissue donation)

### **Nova Scotia:**

Nova Scotia Health Regional Tissue Bank

- › Phone (toll-free): 1-800-314-6515

### **OR**

- › Call QEII Locating at 1-902-473-2220 and ask to have the Tissue Bank Specialist on call paged.

### **Prince Edward Island (PEI):**

Organ and Tissue Donation PEI

- › [www.makeitzero.ca](http://www.makeitzero.ca)
- › Phone: 902-368-5920

# Notes:

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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 all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

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

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