

Patient & Family Guide
2020

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

Aussi disponible en français :
Transplantation de tissus (FF85-2135)



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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?

Donor tissues include:

- **Corneas** (the clear front layer of the eye): These help to restore sight. Damaged corneas are replaced with healthy corneas from the eyes of a human donor who has died.
- **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 burn patients.
- **Skin**: A paper-thin layer of skin can be used to treat severe (very bad) burns, helping to save a burn patient's life.
- **Bone**: This is used in orthopedic surgeries, cancer surgeries, and to prevent amputations (removing a limb).
- **Tendons** (joins muscle to bone): These are used to repair ligaments, such as the ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in the knee.

- **Fascia** (connective tissue): This can be used in spinal or bladder surgeries, such as adding bladder support.
- **Meniscus** (part of the knee): A healthy meniscus can replace a torn and damaged meniscus.
- **Heart valves**: These can replace damaged or diseased valves and save a recipient's life.

Where do tissues for transplant come from?

Tissues come from tissue donors who have died. A tissue donor is someone who decided to help others through the selfless act of tissue donation.

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
- › Syphilis
- › Hepatitis B and C
- › 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 that come with getting a tissue transplant. These include disease or infection. While the chance of this is very low, be sure to talk with your primary health care provider 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. They will then 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.

It is important to remember that many of the symptoms you have after surgery are common and are not caused by your transplant.

Pain that gets worse instead of better or a fever may be signs of an unexpected complication.

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 them about your symptoms. They will be able to tell you what to do.
- If you cannot talk with your primary health care provider, call your surgeon's office. Tell them about your symptoms. They may tell you to come to their office or to go to the 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 and cannot be shared. As a recipient, your personal information is also kept confidential and is not shared.

Can I thank my donor family if I want to?

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 thank you card. Your letter or card is anonymous and will be reviewed by someone from the tissue bank. It will not include any information that may identify you.

For information on communicating 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 in the Maritimes, please visit:

New Brunswick:

NB Organ and Tissue Program

- › 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

- › www.cdha.nshealth.ca/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.

PEI:

Organ and Tissue Donation

- › www.makeitzero.ca
- › Phone: 902-368-5920

Looking for more health information?

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

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.