



**Trinity  
Hospice**

*Compassion and care*

# Cornea Donation

Giving the gift of sight



**Information for patients, their families and friends.**

# Cornea donation – giving the gift of sight.

**Did you know** that cornea donation for transplant may be an option following your death or that of a loved one? The gift of sight can provide great comfort to many patients and their families at a time of difficulty, when experiencing the loss of a loved one. Within Trinity, we are aware that this act of generosity can give hope to others by improving or enabling sight, however, we realise this is not a step that everyone feels comfortable to take.

**Eye donation takes place up to 24hrs after death** and can take place at the hospice, funeral directors, or hospital mortuary. The cornea is the clear front window of the eye which lets light in so you can see, it is 0.5mm-1mm thick and retrieval requires whole eye donation to ensure preservation of the cornea for transplant.

**This leaflet aims to provide you with the facts regarding eye donation, supporting you to make an informed decision.**

## How could my donation help others?

**Eye donation can be a hugely positive act for the donor, their family, and the recipient. By donating corneas, you are donating sight.** You are allowing people to see what they can only imagine. Cornea transplants help to restore the sight of people across the UK every year, these donations are only possible through the generosity of people who are willing to help others.

### Quick facts:

- Eye donation from 1 donor can help up to 8 recipients if the sclera and corneas are transplanted
- A cornea transplant is a 'sight saving' operation.
- A person can donate up to their 96th birthday (up to 86th with eye conditions)
- There is currently a shortage of corneas, causing a waiting list for transplant surgery in the UK.
- Both old and young patients can benefit

## Who can donate?

The good news is most people can donate their corneas, patients with various cancer diagnosis are able to donate.

Unfortunately, some people cannot donate including people with conditions including:

- blood borne viruses
- dementia and other neurological conditions
- cancers of the blood such as myeloma and leukaemia
- metastatic melanoma

Please speak to a member of our team who will be happy to discuss suitability with you.

## Is there an age limit to donation?

A person can donate up to their 96th birthday (up to 86 with eye conditions)

## Where and how does the donation take place?

Eye donation can take place in the hospice, funeral directors, or the hospital mortuary **up to 24hrs after death.**

After death a member of our team or those at home with you will need to contact Tissue Services on **0800 432 0559**, a message can be left, the call will then be returned promptly.

The Specialist Nurse in Tissue Donation will discuss the procedure and consent with your next of kin. Once consent is gained retrieval can be arranged.

Eye retrieval is carried out by a specialist team. Throughout the retrieval process the donor will be treated with the greatest care, respect, and sensitivity.

After retrieval, care is taken to ensure the donor's natural appearance is maintained, relatives may visit their loved one after donation. It will still be possible to have an open casket funeral.

**Cornea transplant can make a huge difference to a recipient's quality of life. If they would like to, your family can receive information about the donation if it is used in transplant.**

## What do I do if I want to donate my corneas?

**It is important to share your donation decision – tell those close to you!**

You will need to inform:

- Your closest family and friends
- The Trinity Hospice Team + District Nursing Team if at home
- Your GP
- You can also register by calling: **0300 123 23 23** or online at: **[www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-your-decision](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-your-decision)**

## Where can I find more information?

We are aware considering eye donation can be difficult and you may have many questions. For more information, please speak to one of the Trinity Team, your GP or alternatively access:

[www.organdonation.nhs.uk/cornea-facts/](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/cornea-facts/)

**and search for ‘cornea donation’**

**or call: 0800 432 0559**

### **Trinity Hospice & Palliative Care Services**

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