

“I am so grateful. Words will never be enough.”

“To the loved ones of the amazing person who donated their corneas to help others:

My heartfelt thanks go to the family who, at what must have been one of the worst times of their lives, took the time to agree to grant their relative’s wishes. That decision has given me a new lease of life.

I have regained my independence and am able to drive my car again. I have regained my life. I will live it to the full in memory of my donor and donor family’s generosity.

This has been the most wonderful gift that I could ever receive. Your loved one’s donated tissue lives on in me and I think about and thank my benefactor every day.”

~Anonymous letter from grateful recipient

One person’s donation can help save the sight of up to ten people.

Corneal donation is a very simple and quick procedure which can change the life of people with severe sight loss and painful eye conditions.

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print on request.
Please call PALS:
020 7566 2324/020 7566 2325



Corneal donation: the gift of sight

This leaflet explains the process of corneal donation and how it can change people’s lives.

The gift of sight

If you are reading this leaflet you may be thinking about donation but might be unsure whether this is possible for you or what is involved.

Corneal facts

- The cornea is the clear front ‘window’ of the eye. It is the main focusing element of the eye and if it becomes cloudy from disease, injury or infection, vision is dramatically reduced.
- One person’s donation can help save or even restore the sight of up to ten people.
- Corneal transplant is a successful sight saving operation with 93% of corneas working after one year and 74% still working after seven years.
- Both young and old can benefit. The youngest recipient was a few days old and the oldest 104.
- There is a tissue shortage each year in the UK so only the most severe cases are offered a graft. Many more people would benefit from a sight saving graft if more corneas were available.

Corneal donation

- Most people, apart from the very elderly, can be considered as a cornea donor, including people with cancer and poor eyesight.
- People with blood borne viruses and neurological conditions like dementia cannot donate.
- Those with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and metastatic melanoma are also not suitable.
- The donation will not have any effect on funeral arrangements and the donors’ natural appearance is maintained.
- Consent is normally taken after death from your next of kin.
- The donation is carried out within 24 hours of death and can take place in the hospital/hospice or at the funeral directors.
- The procedure is always performed with respect and dignity by qualified health care professionals.

What you need to do

- Tell your closest family and friends about your decision.
- Call NHSBT on **0300 123 23 23** who can talk you through the process. You can also visit: **www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/tissuedonation**

Please be aware that after your death, NHSBT will approach your next of kin to go through the consent process.

Thank you for your gift of sight and for helping give others hope.

Authors: Tony Ryan, ocular tissue donor coordinator, Azizur Rahman (chief biomedical scientist)
Revision number: 2
Approval date: August 2019
Review date: August 2020