

SEPARATING MYTH FROM FACT



There are number of myths and inaccuracies regarding eye, organ and tissue donation, many of which can cause suitable candidates to choose not to register as donors. Here are the facts from the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA):

Myth: I have a previous history of cataract or laser correction surgery, so I cannot pledge my eyes for donation.

Fact: Very few diseases or conditions interfere with your ability to donate your eyes. Eyes that can't be used for transplant can often contribute to education and research efforts.

Myth: I have cancer, so I cannot pledge my tissues or corneas for donation.

Fact: Almost anyone with cancer (except those with certain blood or eye cancers) can donate their corneas. And in cases where illnesses could preclude donation, your gift can still be used for research purposes. EBAA member eye banks provided more than 24,000 corneas and whole eyes for vision-related research in 2017 alone.

Myth: Donating eyes for research doesn't restore sight to anyone.

Fact: Donating eyes for research can potentially help thousands of people regain their sight, as research on glaucoma, retinal disease, eye complications of diabetes and other sight disorders helps to advance the discovery of the cause and effects of these conditions. This can then lead to new treatments and cures.

Myth: Aged people cannot donate eyes; only young, healthy individuals make suitable donors.

Fact: Anyone can be a potential donor regardless of age, race, or medical history. (When it comes to corneal tissue, everyone is a universal donor; your blood type does not even have to match.) Practically, anyone who is above one year of age can donate their eyes, and there is no upper age limit.

Myth: Blind people can't donate their eyes.

Fact: The cause of blindness doesn't always reside in the cornea; some of the most common causes of blindness—macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy—reside in the retina or macula rather than in the cornea. In those instances, the healthy corneal tissue could be donated to a patient suffering from blindness of the cornea and restore their sight.

Myth: My religion forbids organ donation.

Fact: All major religions support eye, organ and tissue donation and see it as the final act of love and generosity toward others.

Myth: Doctors won't work as hard to save my life if I'm a registered organ donor.

Fact: If you are sick or injured and admitted to the hospital, the number-one priority is to save your life. Strict laws protect potential donors from any form of medical rationing or discrimination, and eye, organ and tissue donation can only be considered after you are deceased.

Myth: Donating eyes, organs or tissues will disfigure my body, requiring a closed-casket funeral.

Fact: Donors' bodies are treated with the utmost care and dignity, and recoveries are performed with the least invasive methods practical. Therefore, an open casket funeral is possible. And because eye tissue procurement is performed within hours of death, funeral arrangements need not be delayed or interrupted.

Myth: Eye, organ and tissue donation will result in added expense to the donor's family.

Fact: Eye, organ and tissue recovery and preparation expenses are recovered through the recipient's health care coverage; there is no cost to the donor or their family for organ or tissue donation.

**To learn more about cornea donation and transplantation,
visit eyedonationmonth.org.**