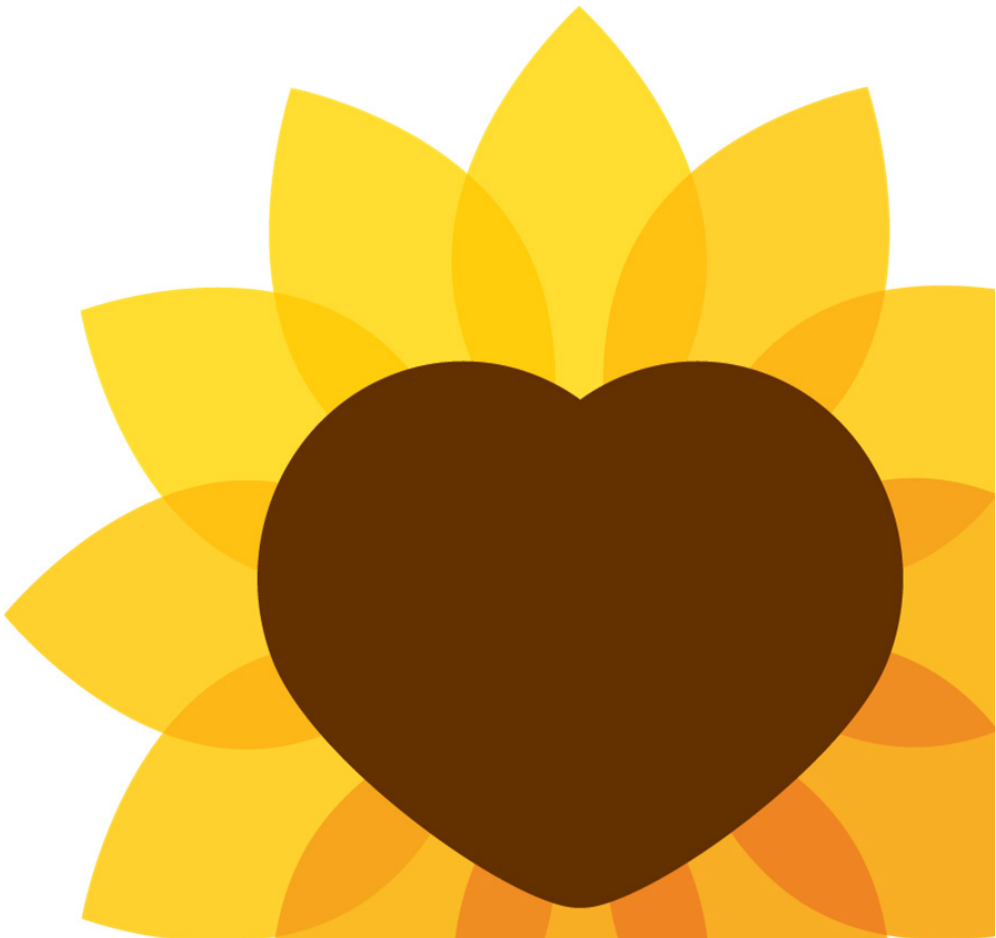


East Cheshire
Hospice

Organ, corneal and tissue donation

Information for patients and those
important to them



Organ, corneal and tissue donation

Donating organs, tissue or corneas after death can make a real difference to people who require transplants or treatment for an illness. Most people with a terminal illness are not able to donate their organs (for example, heart or lungs) after death. However, they are usually able to give their corneas and often other tissues to help others.

From our experience at the hospice we know that organ/tissue donation can help patients and families feel comforted by knowing that they have given hope to others, and that some good has come out of their loss. However, we also realise that not everyone feels comfortable with taking such a step.

If you are reading this leaflet, you may be thinking about organ donation. Surveys show that although 70% of the population in this country say that they would be glad to donate an organ, only 15% actually register as a donor. This may be because they don't get round to it, or perhaps because they're not sure what's involved.

Corneal donation

The cornea is the eye's clear outermost surface that covers the front of the eye.

Here are some facts that may help you make up your mind:

- Although people with cancer cannot donate internal organs (like hearts and lungs) after death, they can sometimes donate their cornea (the transparent tissue that covers the front of the eye). There are some exceptions like blood cancers, blood borne infections or eye disease so please do ask clinical staff for more information.
- The donation of a cornea will enable someone's sight to be restored or improved - one donation can help up to four people
- If you decide you wish to go ahead, a consent form may be signed (although there is no legal requirement to do so)
- After your death, an ocular (eye) donor coordinator will contact your next of kin to obtain further information about your medical history and consent before the donation can go ahead
- The removal of corneas usually takes place in the hospice or at the funeral directors, and is carried out with the same care and respect as any other procedure – it does not prevent relatives saying goodbye or affect funeral arrangements.
- In most cases, you will look unchanged after donating your cornea although occasionally there may be slight bruising round the eyes.

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

If you wish to donate your corneas you just need to let staff at the hospice, or your GP, know that you would like this to happen. We will ensure it is recorded in your clinical record.

Tissue donation

Tissue donation is the giving of tissues like skin, heart valves, bone and tendons to those who will benefit. Tissues are taken from the deceased donor and transplanted to patients who need them.

What tissue can be donated?

People who are dying from conditions other than cancer may be able to donate other tissue:

- Bone can be used to help improve and restore mobility and can prevent limb amputation in bone cancer patients
- Heart valves can be used to save the lives of patients suffering from diseased or damaged valves, and young children born with malformed hearts
- Skin can help to save the lives of people with severe burns as a graft helps to reduce pain and prepares underlying tissue for later treatment it also helps to reduce scarring, but it can take a number of skin grafts to help a severely affected

- Tendons can be used to restore mobility in patients with badly damaged knee joints
- The whole body can also be donated to medical science.

Referrals and consent are the same as for corneal donation but your body will need to be transferred to a local mortuary to enable retrieval of the donated tissue.

Can anyone donate tissue?

Yes, most people without cancer can donate tissue but there are some exceptions. Please ask clinical staff for further information.

Where does tissue donation take place?

It usually takes place at the funeral directors.

How do I donate some of my tissues?

If you wish to donate some of your tissues you just need to let staff at the hospice, or your GP, know that you would like this to happen. We will ensure it is recorded in your clinical record. We also encourage you to talk through your decision with your family or other people close to you, so that they can support your wishes. You can of course change your mind at any time.

Will my family or those close to me know who my donation has helped?

Your donation will make a huge difference in the life of someone who is ill and requiring corneal or tissue donation. The National Referral Centre, which co-ordinates corneal and tissue donation throughout the country, are able to tell your family that your donation has been used and how it has helped a patient.

If you have any questions that aren't answered in this leaflet, we hope you will talk them over with a member of staff who will be glad to help. Some people may find it helpful to discuss this matter with their religious leader before making up their mind.

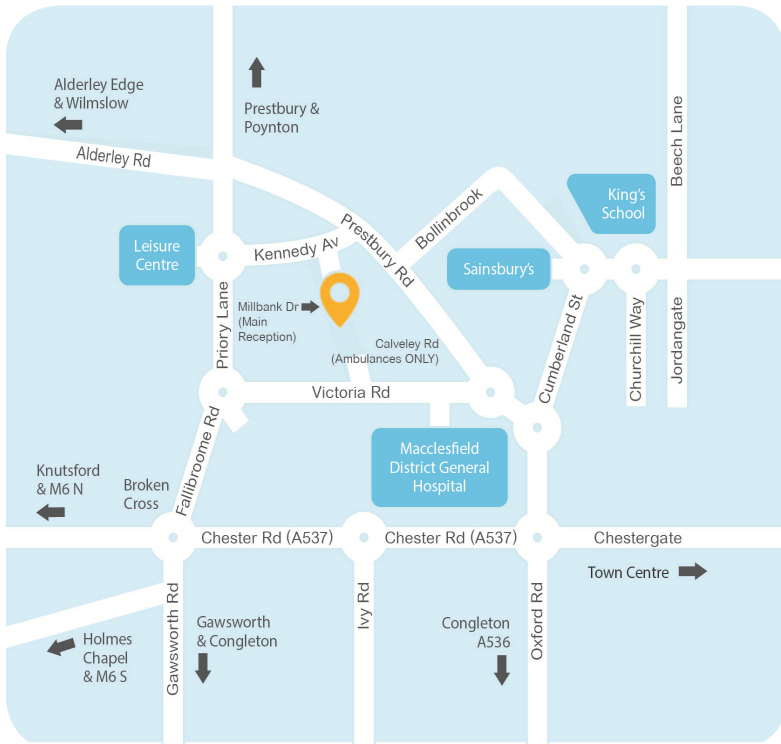
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Notes

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