

The Organ Donation Process

Donation is a gift of life, generously given to save and improve other people's lives.

This resource was designed to help you and your family better understand the donation process. While the timelines are not exact, we hope this information will provide a general understanding of what needs to happen before the recovery of your loved one's organs occurs.

We understand that this can be an emotionally exhausting time. Our team will support you in any way that we can. The hospital staff members and/or UW Organ and Tissue Donation (UW OTD) personnel can communicate with you at any time, from any location, so please feel free to ask questions. Remember that it is ok for you to take breaks or to go home. The hospital staff and the UW OTD coordinator will work together throughout the entire process, and are available at any time to answer questions.

Serology Phase (Blood Testing)

- This is the first phase of the donation process. Blood is tested, mainly for infectious diseases, but also to find out if the potential recipients are a good match.
- Blood samples are transported to Itasca, IL, and Madison, WI, for testing. Once the blood is received, the testing takes a minimum of five hours to complete.

Management Phase (Maintaining Organ Function)

- This phase is ongoing until the point that the organs are recovered in the operating room.
- Your family will be asked to participate in an interview about your loved one. You may hear this referenced as a "medical/social history" or "DRAI." This conversation takes 30-60 minutes and may include more than one family member or close friend. During this private time with a UW OTD coordinator, you will be asked very sensitive questions. Answers are kept

confidential. These questions are asked for the safety of the potential recipients. This can be a difficult process, so if you need a break at any point, please let the coordinator know.

- Monitoring devices, which may be referred to as "lines," are used to help the nurses and doctors monitor your loved one's organ function. They will work to maintain an appropriate blood pressure, and medications may be given to assist with organ function. X-rays and other tests may be done. Cooling or warming blankets may be placed on your loved one to maintain their temperature. Your loved one will always be cared for in a sensitive and highly respectful manner.

Allocation Phase (Matching Recipients with the Gift)

- Once the blood test results are obtained and the interview is complete, the UW OTD coordinator will begin to identify potential recipients.
- The organs are matched with recipients according to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) waitlist, the list of people who need an organ transplant.
- Recipients are matched by many different factors including, but not limited to, blood type, length of time on the waiting list, how sick they are, body size and/or geographic location.
- Additional tests may be needed to determine if your loved one's heart and lungs are functioning at a high enough level to allow for transplantation.
- Once a recipient is matched to a specific organ, the UW OTD coordinator will communicate between the staff at your loved-one's hospital and those at the recipient's hospital. The details of this process depend on which organs are being transplanted, and to what location they will travel. Examples of this include the travel time for the recipient to get to their transplant hospital or the travel time for the recovery team to get to the location of your loved one.



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Organ Recovery Phase (Recovery Location)

- Once the recipients are confirmed and the surgical recovery time is set, the UW OTD coordinator will schedule the surgical recovery location and coordinate services with the recovery team(s). If your loved one's organs are going to more than one transplant center, there could be more than one recovery team in the operating room.
- There are two locations where recovery can occur: the Centralized Recovery Center (CRC) or at the hospital where your loved one is being served (donor hospital).

Centralized Recovery Center (CRC)

- If your loved one's gifts will be recovered at the Centralized Recovery Center (CRC) the UW OTD coordinator will place a transportation request with UW MedFlight.
- UW MedFlight is a critical care transport team. They provide the highest level of supportive care for your loved one. You and your loved one's care team will be told the estimated arrival time of the UW MedFlight team.
- The UW MedFlight team will meet with your loved one's care team for updates on your loved one's care. If you wish, they will also meet with any friends and family remaining at your loved one's bedside.
- This is the time when you will say your final goodbyes to your loved one.
- The UW MedFlight team will care for your loved one and transport them via ground or air to the Centralized Recovery Center at UnityPoint Health-Meriter, in Madison, WI.
- Upon arrival, your loved one will be cared for by the staff at the Centralized Recovery Center.

Donor Hospital

- If your loved one's gifts will be recovered at the donor hospital, the operating room will be scheduled for organ donation.
- The UW OTD team will update you as the recovery schedule progresses.
- The organ recovery team(s) will arrive and introduce themselves to you and answer any remaining questions.
- You will say your final goodbyes to your loved one and the team will take your loved one to the operating room.

Organ Recovery Phase (Recovery Surgery)

- During the recovery, the surgical team will pause to honor your loved one with a moment of silence. They can play music that is special to your loved one, if you wish.
- The organs are surgically recovered. This can take three to four hours.
- The organs are transported to the transplant recipient's hospital.
- Tissue and eye recovery agencies coordinate the surgical recovery of these gifts. Tissue recovery may occur in a different location than organ recovery.
- The UW OTD team will coordinate transportation arrangements between the recovery suites and your funeral home of choice.
- The recovery agencies pay for all costs associated with transportation and the donation process.
- Your family will be contacted by UW OTD within 10-14-days of the recovery, and you will be told what organs were transplanted.

Know that your loved one is leaving a legacy by saving and improving the lives of others. On behalf of the potential recipients, we thank you.