



## **Body Donor Program McGill University**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**



**1. Are there any documents/forms that I must complete and return in order to donate my body?**

The only document required for donation is the Body Donor Card, which you must sign and then have signed by two witnesses. It is important to keep the card with you at all times (e.g. in your wallet with other forms of personal identification), as this card serves as the official authorization for donation. It is necessary to have the card readily available, so that there are no delays in the transport of the donor's body.

Since each body must be evaluated at the time of death in order to ensure that the potential donor meets all eligibility criteria for donation, acceptance of a donation can never be fully guaranteed beforehand, and a registry of potential donors is therefore not kept by the University. Consequently, no documents need to be sent to the University at any point preceding death. It is therefore also not necessary to indicate your wish for body donation in your will.

**2. Is there an age limit for body donation?**

There is no age limit for participation in the Body Donor Program.  
The minimum age for donation is 18 years old.

**3. Are bodies ever refused?**

Bodies can be refused if they do not meet the criteria set forth by the University. For example, a donor who was infected by one of certain contagious diseases, who has donated organs, or who exceeds maximum height or weight limits are some examples of situations in which a body may be refused. The University also reserves the right to refuse donations during periods of full capacity or closure of facilities due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. construction).

**4. Are there costs related to body donation?**

Neither the donor nor his/her family will be asked to pay any fees, unless: 1) the distance travelled to collect the body is greater than the limits determined by the educational institution (60 km for



McGill); or 2) upon completion of the research, the family wishes to retrieve the ashes, in which case the funeral home requires an administrative fee of \$150.

**5. Is it possible to have a funeral service/viewing of the body prior to donation?**

Since the body should be collected by the University within a maximum of 48 hours after death for cases of death at a hospital, or within 6-8 hours for cases of death at home or in a residence without refrigeration facilities, funeral or viewing services immediately following death are unfortunately not possible.

**6. Will the identity of the donor be revealed to students and researchers?**

Body donation is an anonymous gesture. Personal identification of the body is used by and accessible to only the Director and Administrator of the Body Donor Program. Researchers, technicians, and students working with the bodies do not have access to identification information. Studies with the donors take place in restricted-access facilities, either in the Anatomy Laboratory on the McGill University main campus or in authorized laboratory spaces in affiliated medical institutions.

**7. Will I be able to donate both my organs and my body once I pass away?**

Due to the nature of the teaching and studies that work with the bodies, it is important that the body be unaffected by organ removal. Therefore, the donor must choose between organ donation and body donation.

**8. Will the findings of the research be made available to my family/friends?**

Information on the specific procedures performed upon each body is not revealed before, during, or after the studies. However, all donations are used by McGill students, professors, and researchers for the basic teaching of anatomy, or by medical specialists who may want to practice or investigate surgical techniques. The goal of studies is for teaching purposes, and autopsies are not performed; the University is therefore not able to provide further information about the causes of death.

**9. How long will the study last? How long will you keep the body?**

The study generally lasts between one and two years. In certain cases this may be longer. Moreover, the study dates follow the cycle of the academic year (September through June); therefore, if we receive a body in mid-December, for example, the study will most likely not begin before the following September.



**10. What happens to the body once you have completed the study or research?**

If the family does not have specific burial plans, McGill offers a general cremation service, after which the ashes are buried in a site reserved for the University at Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal. In this case, all burial expenses are incurred by McGill University. Should the family wish that the ashes be returned to them, the University must be notified in writing within 2 weeks of the person's death. In this case, the family will be notified upon completion of studies and may make arrangements to retrieve the ashes in person at the funeral home (administrative fees of \$150 will apply).

Please note that if the family has been contacted by the University but has not responded with confirmation indicating their choice regarding ashes/burial within a period of three months following the date of death, for administrative reasons the file will automatically be marked for burial at Mount Royal Cemetery and cannot be changed. For a map showing the location of the plot belonging to McGill University at Mount Royal Cemetery, please click [HERE](#).

**11. Do you hold any kind of ceremony once you have finished the study?**

All families of body donors are invited to our annual Commemorative Service, held each year in the month of June. At the time of the donor's death, we request notification from family members of the names and addresses of those who may wish to attend in the future, so that invitations may be issued accordingly. The donor will be honored during the summer following the completion of the studies.

**Thank you for your interest in the McGill University Body Donor Program.**

**Please do not hesitate to contact us at**

**(514) 398-2575 or [bodydonor@mcgill.ca](mailto:bodydonor@mcgill.ca) for additional information.**