



Willed Body Donation Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there an age limit for body donation?

No – as long as you are over the age of 18, there is no upper age limit.

Is my body automatically accepted if I have signed the Anatomy Act Consent Form or included instructions in my Will?

No, acceptance is not automatic. Each body is assessed at the time of death and in some situations, bodies cannot be accepted. Some examples* are:

- Serious infectious disease
- Septicemia (blood infection)
- Height and weight ratio limits (over 6' tall, over 200 lbs or body mass index over 29)
- Recent major surgery
- Severe trauma
- Autopsy or embalmed
- Extended time after death (over 24 hours; 72 hours if the body is kept in a morgue)
- Ruptured aortic aneurysm
- Some neurological diseases
- Excessive edema
- Radioactive seed implants
- COVID-19
- ***Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of reasons for refusal and is subject to change. The decision of acceptance/refusal will be at the discretion of MacKinnon and Bowes on behalf of the Division of Anatomy at the time of death.***

What can I do to ensure my wishes are followed?

We cannot guarantee anyone's acceptance until an assessment is done at the time of death. However, to ensure the process of body donation is initiated, we recommend the following:

- Complete the Anatomy Act Consent Form
- Speak openly to your next-of-kin/executor about your wishes, as they will have to follow through at the time of death

I am also an organ donor, can I do both?

We cannot accept bodies whose organs have been donated at the time of death, with the exception of the eyes. Eye donation must take place prior to the body being delivered to the Division of Anatomy. Please contact the Trillium Gift of Life Network at 1-877-363-8456 for more information on organ and tissue donation.

When should we contact MacKinnon and Bowes?

Your next-of-kin/executor should contact MacKinnon and Bowes at the time of death. They will ask to see the first and last pages of your Will. If there is no Will, your next-of-kin will need to sign a Letter of Intent confirming they are your direct next-of-kin. The assessment cannot take place before this is complete.

If the death is imminent, your next-of-kin/executor can make the phone call to MacKinnon and Bowes prior to the time of death.

Has the Coronavirus (COVID-19) impacted the assessment and acceptance process of the program?

Yes. As a result of the pandemic, the facility where the potential donor passes away may have restrictions in place which impact our ability to assess the donor's body in a timely manner. Rules vary between facilities. Some facilities require that full PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) be worn during assessment, which will increase the cost of the assessment and delivery service providers, MacKinnon and Bowes.

If accepted, how does my body get to the University of Toronto?

MacKinnon and Bowes will transport the body to the Division of Anatomy after assessment is complete and the body is deemed acceptable. A fee that covers transportation and documentation provided by MacKinnon and Bowes, will be invoiced by MacKinnon and Bowes to your estate.

How long does the University of Toronto keep my body?

The University of Toronto will keep your body for up to three years. The remains will then be cremated and either interred in the University of Toronto plot at St. James Cemetery, or returned to your next-of-kin/executor.

Who arranges for and pays for the costs of cremation?

The University of Toronto covers the cremation costs.

What happens with my cremated remains?

Cremated remains are either interred in the University of Toronto plot at St. James Cemetery or returned to your next-of-kin/executor. This decision will be made by your next-of-kin/executor after the body has been accepted. The University of Toronto will cover the cost of interment in the common plot at St. James Cemetery, if that is the decision of your next-of-kin/executor. Alternatively, the next-of-kin/executor can choose to have the cremated remains returned to the estate in which case St. James Cemetery will contact the family after the cremation to schedule a time to pick-up the remains. If delivery is required, the estate will be responsible for covering the cost.

Can the next-of-kin/executor attend the cremation?

No, next-of-kin/executors cannot attend the cremation.