

A Recipient's Story....

Heather, a 23 year old woman, just graduated from a 4 year nursing programme when a long-standing progressive eye disease reduced her vision to the point where she could no longer drive, see the numbers on a bus, or function in her job. After her corneal graft she said, *"When the bandage came off I could see the wall across the room. I could see what was on the table. I couldn't do that before. **I just went, Wow!!**"*

*"The frustrating thing is you don't know how to say thank you. You don't know the people who made this possible. You wish you could tell them that they've made something good come out of someone's death. They gave me back my work. **They gave me a life.**"*

Thank you

4. Can all blind people benefit from a corneal transplant?

No, only those who have a damaged cornea.

5. Can patients who wear glasses, those with cataracts or glaucoma donate?

Yes. Even totally blind people with healthy corneas can donate their eyes. There is no relationship between poor eyesight and being able to be a donor.

6. Can cancer patients donate their eyes?

Yes, most cancer patients can donate. Those who have leukemia, lymphoma, or certain cancers of the eye are not able to donate.

Eye Bank of British Columbia

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Introduction

In British Columbia, we offer families the opportunity to donate their loved ones' organs and tissues. The Eye Bank of British Columbia is a provincial non-profit organization responsible for providing eye tissues for transplantation, education, and research.

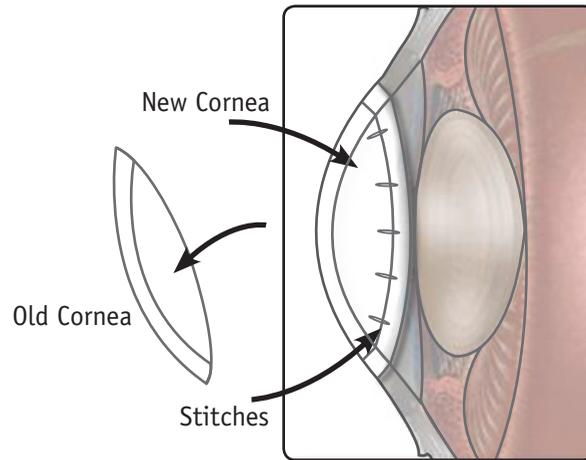
There are two parts of the eye that can be transplanted. They are the cornea and the sclera. The cornea is the front part of the eye that is clear when healthy. Some conditions affect the clarity of the cornea and limit vision. A successful corneal transplant can dramatically restore eyesight. The sclera is the white portion of the eye. It is used for a variety of surgical procedures.

The Eye Bank is able to accept tissue from donors between the ages of 2-75 years of age. It is important to note that the tissue must be retrieved within 8 hours of the patient passing away.

The benefits of one eye donor are:

- up to 2 people may receive corneal transplants
- up to 6 people may receive scleral grafts

In British Columbia today approximately 400 people of all ages and walks of life are waiting for corneal transplants.



How Can I Help?

- Consider becoming an eye donor. Discuss your wishes with your family so that they may honour your decision when the time comes.
- Register to become an organ donor with the Organ Donor Registry. Contact the BC Transplant Society at 604-877-2240 or www.transplant.bc.ca for more information.
- Please note that it is not enough to have a sticker placed on your BC Driver's License or BC Care Card.
- Consider a financial contribution. You can donate through the VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation. Contact them at 604-875-4676 for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Is the whole eye transplanted?**
No, only the clear, front part of the eye (cornea) and/or the white part of the eye (sclera) are used for transplants. The rest of the eye can be used for research if you give your consent for this. This can help in the future treatment of eye disease.
- 2. Will a person be able to have an open-casket funeral?**
Yes. You cannot tell there has been an eye donation. Sometimes there may be a bit of bruising or swelling. Usually there are no visible signs after a donation.
- 3. Is the family told who is to receive the tissue(s)?**
No. A letter of appreciation is sent to the family. The identities of the donor and the recipients are kept confidential under present laws.