

The Medical Minute: Donate life

April 14 2011, By John Messmer, M.D.

Who wants to be a hero? No, it's not a new TV reality show, it's a real question. You can make a heroic gesture now by becoming an organ donor. It's very simple to do. In Pennsylvania, as in most states, you can specify that you are an organ donor when you renew your driver's license. Go to www.organdonor.gov/stateMap.asp and click on your state for details.

Being an [organ donor](#) does not change how your medical team cares for you, nor does it mean they will not try to keep you alive if you want them to. As an organ donor, when you die, you have already given permission to use whatever organs or tissues are suitable for donation to others, sparing your next of kin the heartache of making that decision.

People around the country are waiting for organs -- hearts, kidneys, pancreas, lung, liver and intestines -- and for various tissues -- corneas, skin, heart valves, bone, blood vessels and connective tissues. Even if you think you are not healthy enough to donate, there could still be something useful to give -- you just have to say it's okay.

Would you like to be a hero sooner than at death? Be a [bone marrow](#) donor. Thousands of people with leukemia and other illnesses need bone marrow or stem cell transplants every year.

Marrow, like organs, must be matched to the recipient. While there are millions of people in the bone marrow registry, there is a significant shortage of some ethnic groups, particularly Black, American Indian, Native Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islanders, Hispanic, Latino and mixed races. A good match is more likely to be

found among one's own ethnic group. Go to www.marlow.org to read all about marrow donation and to sign up.

Another way to be a hero now is blood donation, and you can do it every eight weeks. The need for blood is greater than any other tissue – about 38,000 donations are needed daily nationwide. Only about one in 14 of those eligible to donate blood actually do, so there's plenty of opportunity. Interested individuals can make [blood](#) donations at local donor centers. Go to www.cpbb.org/donorinfo.html for more details.

You need not travel to the site of a flood or tsunami, or volunteer to work in a third world country to be a hero. Average Americans can be heroes to many needy people through the gift of life.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: The Medical Minute: Donate life (2011, April 14) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-04-medical-minute-donate-life.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--