

Toronto Board of Rabbis

As Toronto's Jewish community rapidly approaches the 200,000 mark – the challenges and opportunities facing the community are greater than ever before, and the Toronto Board of Rabbis is uniquely suited to this needed leadership as Ontario's oldest and only multi-denominational rabbinic organization.

The members of the Toronto Board of Rabbis lead in our synagogues, educate in our schools, comfort the ill in our hospitals, and guide our community in happy and challenging times. As Toronto's Jewish community grows, the Board is dedicated to ensuring that our Jewish values grow along with it.

For more information:
4600 Bathurst St., #461
Toronto, ON M2R 3V3
Tel: (416) 849-1004

Rabbi Michal Shekel, Executive Director
Email: information@torontoboardofrabbis.org
Website: www.torontoboardofrabbis.org



Registering is EASY

1. Visit BeADonor.ca or your local ServiceOntario location
2. Share your final wishes with your loved ones.

The FACTS:

- One organ donor can save up to eight lives and enhance as many as 75 more.
- Everyone has the potential to be a donor regardless of age or health status.
- Studies show that donating the organs and tissues of a loved one who has died can provide immediate comfort and long-lasting consolation to family members in their grief.

Trillium Gift of Life Network, part of Ontario Health, is responsible for delivering and coordinating organ and tissue donation and transplantation services across the province, as well as for planning, promoting and supporting all health care and allied professionals, advocates and the Ontario public in fulfilling their shared and integrated responsibilities in saving the lives of Ontarians waiting for a life-saving transplant.



To learn more visit: BeADonor.ca

Judaism and Organ Donation



Toronto Board of Rabbis

Every 3 days someone dies waiting for a life saving organ transplant. Please register your and talk to your family today.



The value of human life is a cardinal value in Jewish Law. This is a value which is expressed through the obligation for self-preservation, but also in the duty to save the life of another human being. This obligation is a mitzvah, a commandment, of such a supreme value that it takes precedence over virtually all other religious duties. Therefore we are taught that the sick must eat on the fast day of Yom Kippur; the injured are treated on the Sabbath, etc.

Beginning with breakthroughs in organ transplantation in the 1950's, leading rabbinic authorities throughout the Jewish world have looked upon this new technology as a way to fulfill this mitzvah. We believe in the Divine mandate to save life – an obligation first expressed in the Torah itself: “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.” We see organ donation as a new means to fulfill an ancient, eternal religious duty. This idea also includes the giving of blood, bone marrow transplants, and donating redundant organs.

The Toronto Board of Rabbis affirms this principle in unambiguous terms, because no one should see the preservation of human life as optional – for Jews, it is obligatory. The Toronto Board of Rabbis urges that consent be given for post-mortem organ donation when requested by doctors and hospitals for use when directly needed for life-saving transplantation procedures. This applies to the individual in anticipation of his or her own death, as well as to health care proxies or next of kin whenever they are legally empowered to make such decisions on behalf of the deceased. It is our belief that by so doing, we render a profound and genuine honor to the deceased.

- Toronto Board of Rabbis

“...IF NOT NOW, WHEN?”

- Hillel in the Talmud (Avot 1:14)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do all movements within Judaism agree with organ donation?

A: Yes. The value of pikuach nefesh (the saving of life) which is at the core of organ donation is a principle shared by the entire community, regardless of denominational affiliation.

Q: Doesn't Judaism require us to be buried with our bodies intact?

A: Judaism clearly draws a distinction in the case of donating organs and tissues in order to save a life. The saving of a life is the most important of human activities. This is an overriding principle.

Q: What about age?

A: Everyone has the potential to be an organ and tissue donor regardless of their age. Age is less important than the health of the organs and tissue. The oldest Canadian organ donor to date was over the age of 90 years of age while the oldest tissue donor was 103.

Q: Will my family have to pay?

A: No. The donor's family neither pays for, nor receives payment for organ and tissue donation. All costs related to donation are paid for by the organ procurement program or transplant centre. Hospital expenses incurred before the donation of organs and funeral expenses remain the responsibility of the donor's family.

Q: If I have indicated my decision for organ donation, will everything be done to save my life?

A: Yes. There are strict legal guidelines that must be carefully followed before death is declared and organs can be removed. The doctors who treat a patient at the time of death are separate and distinct from those responsible for organ removal. Organ donation is considered only after every effort has been made to save a patient's life.

Q: If I have cancer or another serious illness, can I still be an organ and tissue donor?

A: Even an individual with a serious illness can sometimes be an organ or tissue donor. If you have a concern, talk it over with your doctor. Ultimately the ability to become an organ and tissue donor depends on several factors, including the health of the organs and tissue at the time of death.

“You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour.”

Leviticus 19:16

“Anyone who is able to save a life, but fails to do so, violates this mitzvah.”

Maimonides 1135-1204

“Every day that passes, people are left wondering if they will have another day of life as they desperately await the news of an organ that could save their life. This is a crisis not only for them, but for their families - spouses, parents, children and communities. The gift of life, in the form of organ donation, is truly a gift of love, as well.”

- Toronto Board of Rabbis