

Writing to Your Donor Family – Fact Sheet

Making the Decision to Write to My Donor Family

Through organ donation, you have received the greatest gift of all – the gift of life.

You may be thinking about how to express your gratitude to the family who unselfishly chose donation at the time of the loss of their loved one. This fact sheet will guide you through the process of sending correspondence to your donor family.

The decision to contact your donor family is a personal choice. It may help knowing that donor families are comforted by the correspondence they receive from the recipients of their loved one's organ.

There is no time limit for corresponding – you may write at any time. If it is more comfortable, you may choose to send a card during the holidays, or a 'thinking of you' card instead of a letter.

If you decide to write, here are some guidelines to help you:

Where do I Begin?

- Open your letter with “Dear Donor Family,”
- * Acknowledge the death of your donor to their family
- Mention any hobbies or special interests you have
- Write about your family (do not include any names)
- Tell them about your illness and how you are doing since your transplant
- Share what has happened in your life since your transplant (birthdays, births, graduations, etc.)
- Recognize the family and thank them for their gift

Carefully consider whether to include religious comments as the views of your donor's family are unknown.



Here are a few sample phrases to help you get started:

It is now approaching (one month, year, etc.) since I received the gift of life through your family's generous gift of organ donation. I want you to know that I continue to give thanks each day for this gift.

*I am so sorry for the loss of your loved one. I know it must be difficult to live without him/her. I hope you can find comfort knowing that your loved one was able to change my life.

I hope this letter finds you well. Words cannot express how thankful I am for your family's generosity and compassion. You have given me a second chance at life. I am deeply sorry for the loss of your loved one.

Closing your card or letter

- Sign your card or letter "the (your organ) recipient" only (do not include your first or last name)
- Do not reveal your address, city, or telephone number
- Do not reveal the name of your hospital or transplant center

Where do I mail my card or letter?

- Place your card or letter in an unsealed envelope
- Include on a separate piece of paper
 - Your full name
 - Date of your transplant

Please forward both documents in a sealed envelope to your transplant coordinator.

Your transplant coordinator will then forward it to Trillium Gift of Life Network, and the Donor Family Services Department will send it to the donor family.

Please allow a couple of weeks for this to be completed.



Will I hear from the donor family?

You may or may not hear from your donor family. Some families have said that writing about their loved one and their decision to donate has helped them in their grieving process. Other donor families prefer privacy and choose not to write to the recipients. It is important to remember that the donor family has experienced the loss of a loved one and may choose not to respond. Either way, donor families consistently tell us that they want to hear from their loved one's recipients.

For more information:

Trillium Gift of Life Network
Attn: Donor Family Services
483 Bay Street
South Tower, 4th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

Phone: 416-619-2313

Email: FamilyServices@giftoflife.on.ca

Toll-Free Information Line:

1-800-263-2833

www.giftoflife.on.ca