



correspondence guidelines transplant recipients



DonateLife agency contacts

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Australian Government
Organ and Tissue Authority



Writing to your donor's family

Receiving a card or note of thanks is very special to the family of an organ and tissue donor. It provides the family with the knowledge that the donation has made a difference and helped others.

A guide for transplant recipients

This guide has been developed to assist you to write to your donor's family. The decision to write is a personal one, as is the donor family's decision to respond to your letter or card. This brochure will help explain the correspondence process.

Recipients often appreciate being able to say "thank you" in an anonymous letter or card. In our experience donor families are interested in knowing how their decision has changed someone's life and appreciate hearing from recipients or their families.

While donor families cherish the letters or cards that they receive, and recipients may value the opportunity to express their gratitude, there is no expectation that there should be an ongoing exchange of correspondence.

What can I write?

Transplant recipients often say that a letter to their donor family is one of the most difficult letters they have ever written, but at the same time it provides them with the chance to reflect and express their thanks and gratitude to the people who offered them this opportunity.

Everyone will express their thanks in their own way, and this brochure hopes to guide you through the process.

To begin your letter or card, you may like to start with 'Dear Donor Family' or a similar phrase which reflects the family.

The correspondence between recipients and donor families is anonymous, therefore it is important that you **do not** include your name, address or any other personal contact details. Please also **do not** include the name of your transplant doctor, the hospital where you had your transplant, or any other potentially identifiable information.

Use simple language and be sensitive to the feelings of your donor's family. You may wish to say a few words about why you needed a transplant and how your life has changed since the transplant or, you may like to simply say "thank you". The length and general information within these letters or cards is up to the individual.

When ending your letter or card, consider signing off with a phrase such as "from a grateful recipient" or a similar phrase that reflects yourself.

You may find this process comes easily to you and you are able to put your feelings down smoothly, for others this process might take time and several attempts before you are happy to forward it on to the donor family. Always remember your transplant team is there to help you during this process if you would like any support.

How do I send my card or letter?

In order to maintain confidentiality we would ask you to place your card or letter in an unsealed envelope, along with a separate note to the recipient transplant coordinator in your transplant unit. The note should contain your name, date of transplant, and organ received. This will enable the coordinator to forward the letter on to the relevant DonateLife Agency for you. You should be aware that all cards and letters are reviewed to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

How does my card or letter reach the donor family?

DonateLife will forward your correspondence to the donor family. You will be contacted if your card or letter cannot be forwarded for any reason. Otherwise you can be assured that it has been passed on.

Just as you had the choice to write to your donor family, the donor family has the choice to respond. Everyone has a different way of coping with the loss of someone they love, and if you do not receive any return correspondence, it may be that writing a reply is difficult for your donor family.

In the event that a donor family chooses to respond, their letters will be forwarded to you with the same care taken to preserve confidentiality.