

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

Prof. Guy Hubens
ASTARC – Human Anatomy and Embryology
Universiteitsplein 1
2610 WILRIJK (Antwerpen)
Tel. +32 3 265 28 28
secretariaat.anatomie@uantwerpen.be
www.uantwerpen.be/body-donation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your intention to donate your body after your death for purposes of education, scientific research and services bears testimony to an extraordinary commitment, which we hugely appreciate.

Two documents are required to officially indicate your intentions:

- *a hand-written, dated and signed will* (see page 2)
- *a duly completed administrative questionnaire* (see page 3)

Please send these documents to:
University of Antwerp - Campus Drie Eiken
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences - ASTARC – Prof. Guy Hubens
Secretariat of Human Anatomy and Embryology
Universiteitsplein 1
2610 WILRIJK (Antwerpen)

Upon receipt we will send you a **card** which you are required to keep with your ID card.

Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you might have: +32 3 265 28 28.

We thank you on behalf of the University of Antwerp.

Prof. Guy Hubens

N.B – We recommend giving your executor a copy of your will along with our contact details.

Will

Anyone leaving his body after death to science for purposes of education, scientific research and service should indicate this in a **hand-written, dated and signed will**, which meets the requirements in terms of competence and is written in the form of a testamentary disposition.

For example,

I, the undersigned (*last name, first name, other names, date and place of birth*), **residing at** (*street, number, postcode, town*) **herewith declare that after my death I leave my body to the University of Antwerp, Prinsstraat 13, 2000 ANTWERPEN, BELGIUM, more specifically to the ASTARC – Human Anatomy and Embryology Research Group, Universiteitsplein 1, 2610 WILRIJK, BELGIUM so that it may be used for purposes of education, scientific research and services.**

Written and signed at (*town*) **on** (*date*).

Signature

Administrative questionnaire

Please fill in the questionnaire below as completely as possible, attach it to your hand-written will (see page 2) and send it to:

University of Antwerp - Campus Drie Eiken
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences - ASTARC – Prof. Guy Hubens
Secretariat of Human Anatomy and Embryology
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Personal details

Name:

Surname:

Gender: male/female (delete as appropriate)

National ID number:

Date of birth:

Place of birth:

Phone/mobile:

Other comments: (e.g., illnesses, pacemaker, prosthetics, transgender...):

.....
.....

Current address

N.B: please inform us of a change of address should you move (in writing or by email).

Street: No.: Box:

Postcode: Town:

Executor (e.g. family member, partner, GP, notary, acquaintance...)

Name:

Street: No.: Box:

Postcode: Town:

Phone/mobile:

I also grant the Laboratory of Human Anatomy and Embryology the permission to store my personal details in a computer database. My data may be accessed or changed by myself and by my executor.

Date and signature

Practical guidelines and information for the executor

The executor should contact a funeral director, or in exceptional cases the town where the individual was registered, once they are deceased (see page 5). The funeral director will then contact the Secretariat of Human Anatomy and Embryology on **+32 3 265 28 28**.

The funeral director will provide the name, first name(s) and date of birth of the deceased as well as the date of death, the municipality where the individual died and the location of the body.

During the weekend or on public holidays an answering machine will give further instructions.

If the deceased died in a hospital or in an institution with a morgue, the body may be stored in the morgue. You can then wait until the next business day to notify the laboratory of the individual's death. The body should preferably be transferred to our laboratory **within 48 hours after death**. We **cannot** accept bodies of individuals who died abroad or bodies on which an autopsy was performed.

What should the funeral director do?

- After a physician has legally established that the individual is deceased, the body should be placed in a coffin (wooden coffin, no polyester or zinc) by a funeral director of your choice, who will also be in charge of transportation to and from the University of Antwerp.
- The funeral director will transfer the body in a **coffin** to the University of Antwerp after having made an appointment by phone and will also be in charge of the subsequent burial or cremation of the deceased.
- If the individual died at home, then the funeral director will submit a *declaration of death* form to the registry of the municipality where the individual died.
- If the individual died in a hospital or institution, the same procedure will be followed unless the hospital or the institution takes care of this declaration.
- If the deceased is to be buried, the funeral director will request permission for the burial from the registry. In this case, he needs the death certificate and a copy of the will.
- If the deceased is to be cremated, two physicians will have to establish the death of the deceased, i.e. the physician who established the individual's death and a medical examiner. The funeral director will then request permission for cremation from the registry. In this case, he needs the death certificate and a copy of the will.
- When the funeral director collects the body, the permission for burial or cremation will be available. The funeral director needs this form to be able to transport the body.
- The funeral (which in some cases may take place up to one year after the death) will take place in the municipality where the deceased was registered and will be arranged by the funeral director. The family will **not** be notified of the funeral **unless** they or the donor have explicitly requested this. If the family wishes to have a ceremony, they will be responsible for organising this.
- The funeral director will send the bill directly to the family (coffin + transport costs + funeral). The descendants can then claim compensation for funeral expenses from the health insurance, the inheritance and so on.

Frequently asked questions

1 Can anyone donate his/her body?

Yes, anybody over the age of 18 can donate his or her body. There is no maximum age limit.

2 Are you continuously looking for body donations?

We have a constant shortage of donors.

3 Can I combine organ donation with a donation of my body?

No. In principle, you are an organ donor unless you have requested your local municipality to be removed from the register (more information at www.e-gezondheid.be). Organ donation and an autopsy always take precedence over donating your body.

4 Will I receive a fee for donating my body?

No. Legally, we are unable to pay you a fee for donating your body.

5 Who will pay for this?

There are no additional costs for donating your body to the University of Antwerp, except the usual costs for the funeral director, including the morgue, the coffin and the burial/cremation services. These are payable by your heirs. The funeral director will bill the family directly for the services, allowing them to be reimbursed for the burial (by the health insurance, the inheritance and so on).

6 Who will pay for the burial if I don't have any family or heirs?

In this case, the executor will contact the municipality where you lived. The municipality or the public social welfare centre in charge of this (this is different in every municipality) will bear the burial costs (more information in the brochure entitled "Waardig afscheid nemen" published by the King Baudouin Foundation: <http://www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=294962&langtype=2067>).

7 Can I choose the university to whom I wish to donate my body?

You should contact the university that is geographically closest to you if you wish to donate your body, but you are free to choose this. Do bear in mind the additional (transportation) costs.

8 Does the university have its own funeral director?

No. You or your family should choose a funeral director.

9 Can I also donate my body without drawing up a will?

No. Before your death you need to send a hand-written and signed will and a duly filled-out administrative questionnaire to:

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Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences - ASTARC - Prof. Guy Hubens
Secretariat of Human Anatomy and Embryology
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Exception: if the deceased has left a written will, which has been certified by a notary public or a solicitor in which he/she indicates that he/she wishes to donate his/her body to science and a copy of this testament is given to us prior to the body being transferred to us, and the body can be transferred to the university within 48 hours of death, an exception will be made.

10 What should I do if I am unable to write out my will myself?

A proxy shall write or type your will. The following phrase should then be added: “Read and approved”. The will should be signed by two witnesses.

11 Why should I appoint an executor?

This is a general rule for people who have no family.

12 Whom can I appoint as executor?

You are free to choose an executor. Usually this individual is a fiduciary, such as a family member, an acquaintance, your GP or someone else who is close to you.

13 Can I donate someone else’s body to science, e.g., that of a husband/wife?

No.

14 What happens after I have sent you my hand-written will and administrative questionnaire?

A file will be created for you and your details will be added to our computer database. Within a month you will receive a card in your own name to keep with your personal documents. This card will state that you have chosen to donate your body to the University of Antwerp after your death for purposes of education, scientific research and services.

15 Can I change my will?

You can change your will at any time and can have the previous one destroyed. All you need to do is send a hand-written statement, signed by you, requesting that your will be destroyed to:

**University of Antwerp - Campus Drie Eiken
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences - ASTARC – Prof. Guy Hubens
Secretariat of Human Anatomy and Embryology
Universiteitsplein 1
2610 WILRIJK (Antwerpen)**

16 Can the university refuse my body?

Yes, there are various reasons for refusing a body:

- If the body is not transferred to our lab within 48 hours after death
- If the body has to be repatriated from abroad
- If an autopsy was performed on the body
- Traffic accident (unless the body can still be embalmed)
- Organ donation (see question 3 – Can I combine organ donation with donating my body?)
- Infectious diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (prion diseases of the central nervous system), skin infection such as shingles (herpes zoster) or methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

These are the most common reasons why a body will not be accepted. The decision whether or not to accept a body for donation to the University of Antwerp is made after death. We recommend informing your family of these conditions in order to avoid unnecessary pain and disappointment.

17 How will people know that I have donated my body to the University of Antwerp after my death?

After you send us your will and the duly completed administrative questionnaire you will receive a card from us stating that you wish to donate your body after death to the University of Antwerp for purposes

of scientific research. The card also features our contact details. You need to keep this card with your ID card. In the administrative questionnaire we will ask you to provide us with the name of your executor: a family member, a friend or your partner. This individual will notify the funeral director, or in exceptional cases the municipality where you were registered (see question 6), and will inform them of the last wishes of the deceased. The funeral director (the municipality) will then contact the Human Anatomy and Embryology research group to make further arrangements.

18 Can a funeral service with the body be held before the body is transferred to the Human Anatomy and Embryology research group by the funeral director?

This all depends on the time of death. It is extremely important that the body is transferred to the university within 48 hours of death. A conventional funeral can be arranged without the body. A photo can be used, for example, for the service.

19 For what purposes will my body be used?

The bodies are mainly used for educational purposes, for teaching the students of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and of Biomedical Sciences. They are also used for learning new surgical techniques and for scientific research.

20 Where is this research conducted?

The research is exclusively conducted at the University of Antwerp, in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

21 Can a report with medical findings be provided to the family?

No. No reports will be drawn up as we do not perform an autopsy. The bodies are largely used for medical education and we do not keep a report with pathological information.

22 How long can my body be made available for education, scientific research and/or services?

Medical education and anatomical studies can take from several days up to two years or longer. After this, the body is released and collected by the funeral director.

23 What happens next?

The deceased's body is placed in a coffin and collected by the funeral director and is then buried or cremated, depending on your will or your family's wishes. Often the family does not wish to attend the actual burial or cremation. If the family wishes to attend, this should be explicitly stated beforehand to the funeral director appointed by you or your family.

24 Does my body have to be buried or cremated?

Legally speaking, every individual registered in a municipality has to be buried or cremated. Usually the funeral takes place in the municipality where you were registered.