

Body donation: 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:

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)

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.