

“As a first year medical student, you already feel the enormous weight of your obligation to care for and serve your community and fellow human beings. I was incredibly inspired by the individuals who donated their bodies to our training...it was a comfort to think that our donors had faith in my ability to learn and valued my education so much that they were willing to personally teach me the foundation of everything I will do as a doctor. I will always remember this gift and will be paying it forward to society for the rest of my career.”

—*Julia, first-year medical student*

To help those interested in anatomical donation, we have compiled a list of frequently asked questions. Since it is difficult to create a truly exhaustive list, we welcome your questions by phone at 509-368-6600 or by email at wsu.willedbody@wsu.edu.

Contact Information

Willed Body Program
College of Medical Sciences
Washington State University
PO Box 1495
Spokane, WA 99210-1495
509-368-6600
509-335-7420 fax
email: wsu.willedbody@wsu.edu
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Willed Body Program



Donation of one's body for the purpose of medical education is a thoughtful and generous gift. Anatomy is one of the most important foundational subjects for students aspiring to become physicians, dentists, and allied health professionals, and study of the human body provides the basis for understanding structure, function, and disease. Nothing can surpass the experience of learning anatomy from real human bodies. Body donation is a perpetual gift because students who train at WSU will carry their knowledge to all parts of the world and pass the knowledge on to others who learn from them. Because of the generosity of our donors, the Willed Body Program has been able to provide students with this unique and priceless learning experience since 1972.



Willed Body Program Q&A

Who can donate their body to the Willed Body Program?

Any person 18 years of age or older who is competent to make end of life decisions can enroll in the program. There is no upper age limit.

How will my body be used?

Donated bodies are used in our program for teaching purposes in training medical and health sciences students, and to a minor extent in educational research. Most donated bodies are used for anatomical study at Washington State University. Some bodies are loaned to other area colleges and universities to support medical and allied health education, but are returned to our program after use.

Are there ethical standards in the use of my body in your program?

Yes. The body is always treated with dignity and respect. Only authorized students and staff have access to the body and they are trained and expected to follow the highest standards of professionalism.

May I still have a funeral?

Since it is necessary to obtain the body as soon as possible after death, this precludes a funeral service with your body present. Of course, the family may still arrange a memorial service.

What happens to my body after your studies are completed?

Our studies are usually completed in one to four years. After that time, the next of kin are notified and the body is cremated. Cremation is the only option for disposition of donated bodies. The program pays for cremation and all bodies are cremated individually. A final interment form is included with the original donation paperwork.

There are two options for final disposition arrangements:

1. Burial of the cremated remains in the Medical Sciences Memorial Plot at Greenwood Cemetery in Palouse, Washington.
2. Return of the cremated remains to the residence of the legal next of kin.

Please indicate your wishes on the final interment form when you return your paperwork and advise your next of kin of your wishes. You or your next of kin may change the arrangements by contacting our office in writing.

Bodies are cremated in June. There is no cost to the family for burial in the Greenwood Cemetery in Palouse or return of the cremated remains. If interment in Greenwood Cemetery is requested, burial takes place in September of each year. The WSU Willed Body Program conducts a memorial service at this time. Family and friends are welcome to attend. If the family wishes to have the name of the donor placed on a memorial stone at the cemetery, the family must pay this cost. Inquiries about the service or memorial stones can be directed to Mark Kramer, Kramer Funeral Home, at 509-878-1221.

May I donate organs at the time of death and still be able to donate my body?

No, unless only corneas are donated. Our program is a whole body program. You may be registered with our program and an organ donation program simultaneously. Our paperwork is not binding and does not take precedence over organ donation. However, if you or your next of kin choose to donate your organs (other than corneas) upon your death, then whole body donation is not possible, and we will decline your donation.

Are there any costs involved in donating my body?

The Willed Body Program pays for the *routine* costs associated with donating a body, which are substantial. These include embalming, cremation, and burial in our program's cemetery plot in Palouse, Washington, or return of the cremated remains to the legal next of kin. We also pay for transportation of the body if you live in the Pullman/Moscow or Clarkston/Lewiston areas of Washington or Idaho.

The funeral directors who prepare the donated bodies for our program are located in rural southeast Washington. Their availability to travel to areas outside our region depends on the time a request occurs and the workload in their local funeral business. ***Therefore, if you live outside the immediate areas of Pullman/Moscow or Clarkston/Lewiston, it may be necessary to have a funeral home or transportation service in your area make the first response when death occurs.***

Our program *cannot* cover the costs of services provided by a funeral home or transport service. These services may include:

1. Transportation of the body to a funeral home at the time of death (first response).
2. Storage and refrigeration at the funeral home.
3. Preparation of the death certificate or other paperwork by the funeral home.
4. Transportation of the body from the donor's home, a funeral home, hospital, or nursing home, to our program, if it is provided by someone other than our funeral directors.

Your family, estate, or funeral insurance would need to assume the above costs, as a contribution to medical and health care education.

We recommend that you contact a funeral home in your area to ask about such costs so there are no surprises at the time of death if your body is accepted for donation. If you decide to submit donation paperwork to our program, we advise you to give a copy of the paperwork to the funeral home to inform them of your wishes to donate should your body be accepted at the time of death.

Will I or my survivors be paid for my donation?

No. The sale of bodies or body parts is prohibited by law. Bequeathal of a body is a selfless gift made in the spirit of advancing science and learning. Washington State University does not profit from the use of donated bodies.

How is the program contacted after my death?

Your next of kin or healthcare provider should contact the WSU Willed Body Program at 509-368-6600 as soon as possible within 24 hours of your death. If it is after hours, they will be directed to another number. The caller will be asked about the cause of death and the condition of the body and a decision will then be made to accept or decline the donation.

Will the program accept a body without the donor being pre-registered?

We prefer to have a donor's paperwork on file before accepting a donation, because it simplifies the procedures involved at the time of death. However, for those not pre-registered, we may accept donations made at the time of death by someone who is legally authorized and of legal age to do so.

Can I select a local funeral home to embalm my body?

No. Special procedures are used that are different from normal embalming. The Willed Body Program works with a funeral home in our area to provide this service.

Would it be possible for my family to receive a report of medical findings or disease conditions?

No. Our program does not provide any reports concerning the cause of death or the discovery of any medical conditions.

Does the program guarantee that my body will be accepted?

No. *It is important to understand that filing of the paperwork with our program is not a contract and does not guarantee acceptance.* The decision to accept or decline a body can only be made at the time of death since the cause of death or condition of the body may render the body unsuitable for use by our program. Regrettably, budget limitations and lack of space in our program may also restrict our ability to accept donations. These situations are uncommon, but they do occur. ***To prevent misunderstandings and disappointment after your death, we urge you to have alternate arrangements in place and clearly explained to your family in the event that your donation is declined by the program.***

What conditions or situations would prevent the program from accepting my body?

The acceptance of a body donation is made on a case-by-case basis at the time of death and the program reserves the right to refuse a donation. Reasons why the donation may be declined include, but are not limited to:

- Autopsy of the body
- Severe injury or trauma, such as drowning, burns, or motor vehicle accident
- Contagious diseases, such as hepatitis, TB, active herpes, HIV, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- Jaundice
- Open wounds and skin ulcerations, including recent major surgeries
- Decomposition of the body—embalming or refrigeration is necessary soon after death
- Previous embalming (embalming for anatomical study requires special techniques)
- Advanced cancers that distort the anatomy (examples: pancreatic and ovarian cancers)
- Excessive obesity or emaciation (Body Mass Index above 35 or below 18)
- Organ donation, except for corneas
- Ruptured aneurysm (e.g., aorta, brain)
- Budget or space restrictions in our program
- Dissent by family members over the donation

How is my body transported to the Willed Body Program?

If the body is within the Pullman/Moscow or Clarkston/Lewiston areas, our funeral directors will normally make the first response at the time of death and transport the body directly to their embalming facility.

If the body is outside the Pullman/Moscow or Clarkston/Lewiston areas, it is often necessary to have a local funeral home or transportation service make the first response at the time of death. In these circumstances, depending on where the death occurs, the body is stored at the local funeral home (in which case transportation to Pullman occurs later) or transported directly to our funeral directors in Palouse, Washington. In either case, our program *cannot* pay for these costs, and they are the responsibility of the family or estate (see the FAQ above: Are there any costs involved in donating my body?).

What if I live in western Washington, southern Idaho, or eastern Oregon?

Since donations offered from these locations require long distance transportation, arrangements would need to be made with a local funeral home in your area, and your next of kin or estate would be responsible for the costs involved with removal, storage, and transportation of the body to our funeral directors.

What if I die in another state outside the Northwest or in another country?

Your next of kin should contact a donation program in that state or country.

What if I change my mind about donation?

The donation forms are not binding documents, only statements of your wishes after death. You may revoke or revise the forms at any time by contacting our office in writing.

How do I enroll in the program to become a donor?

To request the necessary forms, write, call, or email:

Willed Body Program
College of Medical Sciences
Washington State University
PO Box 1495
Spokane, WA 99210-1495
509-368-6600
email: wsu.willedbody@wsu.edu
website: willedbody.wsu.edu



The forms may also be downloaded at willedbody.wsu.edu.

Four forms come in the donation paperwork packet: (1) an Anatomical Gift Form giving consent for donation, (2) a Personal and Contact Information Form, (3) a Medical History Form, and (4) a Final Interment Form documenting your wishes for disposition of cremated remains.

Please send the original completed forms to our office and make copies for yourself, your family, your physician, and others who need to be informed about your final arrangements. After we receive your completed paperwork we will send you an identification card to be carried in your wallet or purse.