

Contact details

For all enquiries and to receive a registration form please contact the Human Body Bequest Programme.

Bequest Coordinator
Human Body Bequest Programme

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**MEDICAL AND
HEALTH SCIENCES**

Donating your body to science Human Body Bequest Programme

Body donation under the Human Tissue Act 2008



**MEDICAL AND
HEALTH SCIENCES**

The importance of body bequests

Anatomy has always been a vital part of medical training, with dissection of the human body being the essence of anatomy teaching since the Renaissance. The Department of Anatomy and Medical Imaging has the privilege of administering the Human Body Bequest Programme at the University of Auckland and has done so since the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences opened in 1968.

The teaching and research of anatomy is an all-important aspect of the training of our future doctors and health professionals and we are extremely grateful to people who wish to bequeath their body for this vital purpose.

Bodies bequeathed to the University of Auckland Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (Department of Anatomy and Medical Imaging) are used in the education and training of medical students, surgeons, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and other health professionals in the study of anatomy, scientific studies and related research. All donations are treated with due dignity and respect.

The process of accepting and managing bequests is governed by the Human Tissue Act (2008) and is carried out under the formal authority and guidance of the Inspector of Anatomy from the New Zealand Police.

Process of bequest

If you would like to register to become a donor to the Human Body Bequest Programme, please contact the Bequest Coordinator to receive a registration form. It is important that you discuss your intentions with your next of kin, executor of your estate and family doctor. It is only with the consent of your family that we are able to accept your generous donation.

The study of a donated body may continue for several years and, with permission, in some cases selected tissue may be kept indefinitely for continuous use in teaching, scientific studies and research. Your family will need to give consent for any tissue to be retained so it is important you discuss this possibility with them.

Once you have completed the registration process, we will keep your name and contact information on file. At the time of death, your family, attending doctor or funeral director should contact the Human Body Bequest Programme at the University as soon as possible. In order to determine if a body is appropriate for donation we need to get details of your medical history from your GP or treating doctor.

There are reasons why, at certain times and due to certain conditions, we might not be able to accept your generous donation. We reserve the right to decide whether or not to proceed with the donation. This decision can only be made at the time of death. If accepted, we will liaise with the funeral director to transport your body to the University.

Once the study of the body is complete (typically 1–3 years), the remains will be cremated in an individual casket. At the time of donation, your family will be given the option of either collecting the ashes from the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, or having them interred on their behalf at our memorial plot at the Mangere Lawn Cemetery. If your family wishes to collect the ashes, we will notify them when they are ready for collection.

Frequently asked questions

How do I donate my body for anatomical teaching and research to the University of Auckland?

Please contact the Bequest Coordinator to register your interest in body donation. It is recommended that you discuss your wishes with your next of kin, executor of your estate and your family doctor. It is only with the consent of your family that we are able to accept your generous donation.

How will my body be used?

Our department is involved in the training of medical students, surgeons, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and other health professionals in the study of anatomy, scientific studies and related research. All donations are treated with due dignity and respect. The study of a donated body may continue for several years and, with permission, in some cases selected tissue may be kept indefinitely for continuous use in teaching and research. Your family will need to give consent for any tissue to be retained so it is important you discuss this possibility with them.

What happens when I die?

Your family, attending doctor or funeral director should contact the Human Body Bequest Programme at the University as soon as possible on 09-923 6703. We will decide whether the donation can be accepted for the Human Body Bequest Programme at the time of death. We endeavour to accept every case, however occasionally we may be unable to accept your donation for medical or logistical reasons.

Are all donations accepted?

There are reasons why, at certain times and due to certain conditions, we might not be able to accept your generous donation. We reserve the right to decide whether or not to proceed with the donation.

Are there conditions which make my body not suitable for donation?

There are certain conditions which may mean that we are unable to accept your donation. These include (but are not restricted to):

- Need for a coroner's post-mortem.
- Recent surgery.*
- Infectious diseases (Hepatitis, HIV, TB etc).
- Body weight greater than 90kg or less than 45kg.*
- Open wounds/pressure sores.*
- Undiagnosed (rapid-onset) dementia.

**Guidelines only – If in doubt, talk to us.*

Are there any geographical constraints?

We typically take registrations from within an area approximately 3 hours drive from Auckland. This geographical constraint is taken into consideration before a body can be accepted into the programme.

What happens if the University accepts my body?

Once accepted, we will liaise with the funeral director of your choice to make all of the necessary arrangements for transport of the body to our facility.

What are the costs involved?

The University will pay the costs of transporting you to the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences and for cremation. The other costs (registration of death, any family memorial services) are the responsibility of your estate.

What happens if the University is unable to accept my body?

If declined, it will be the responsibility of your next of kin to make alternative arrangements. As there may be circumstances in which we are unable to accept your generous donation, having an alternative plan will lessen the stress for your next of kin at the time of death.

Can I have a funeral service?

In order to appropriately care for the body, it must arrive in our facility promptly. This means it is not possible to have a traditional funeral service or hold a formal viewing. However, a memorial service can be held without the body being present, if the donor or the relatives wish.

Will my family receive a report of medical findings or be given details of the study of the body?

We do not make findings available to the family about individuals.

Are bodies donated to the Auckland Human Body Bequest Programme, sent to Otago Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences or to other programmes overseas?

No – all bodies donated to the Auckland Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences's Human Body Bequest Programme will remain under the care of the Auckland Facility.

Can I donate if I have cancer or another medical condition such as diabetes or asthma?

Having cancer or other medical conditions does not necessarily prevent a person from donating their body to the programme. This is part of the information we will ask at the time in order to decide if we can proceed.

