
A Guide for Recipients
Writing to the donor family



Organ Donation New Zealand

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The decision to write is a personal one. It can be difficult to find adequate words to convey your gratitude.

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Many organ and tissue recipients would like to communicate their thanks to the donor family and share a bit about themselves following transplantation.

It can be difficult to find adequate words to convey your gratitude but it is important to remember that this correspondence will be hugely appreciated by most donor families.

Often it can be daunting to write a letter to the donor family - a card might be a better option for you.

You are encouraged to wait at least three months after the transplant before writing. This gives you time to recover and feel well.

Please remember that your transplant team and Organ Donation New Zealand (ODNZ) will not facilitate meetings between transplant recipients and donor family members. Confidentiality is maintained to protect the privacy of everyone involved.

A FEW TIPS FOR WRITING TO THE DONOR FAMILY

- You may wish to say thank you to the donor family and recognise the death of their family member. Talk about yourself and your family. It might be helpful for the donor family to hear how the transplant has changed your life. Mention any hobbies or plans you have for the future.
 - Use language that is respectful and sensitive. Remember that the family are coming to terms with the death of a loved one.
 - Don't include identifying information such as your name, where you live, where you work and phone numbers. All correspondence is reviewed and nothing will be sent that contains this information.
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- Simply sign the card with “from a grateful recipient” or something similar.

PLEASE NOTE

This is only intended as a guide. If you would like further assistance, contact your Transplant Co-ordinator.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WRITING

- 1 – Place the letter or card in an unsealed envelope.
- 2 – On a separate piece of paper write your full name and the date of your transplant.
- 3 – Send both to your Transplant Co-ordinator.

Your communication will be forwarded to the donor family via your transplant team and ODNZ. The donor family may indicate they are not ready to receive your correspondence. If this is the case your letter will be held by ODNZ and forwarded when the family is ready. Your transplant team will let you know if your correspondence has not been passed on to the family.

It is also important to remember that while some donor families may choose to respond to your correspondence, some may not. Please do not take this personally. Some donor families may respond years later.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Transplant Co-ordinator.

SHARING YOUR STORY

Sometimes recipients like to share their personal transplant experience. If you are speaking to the media or sharing your story with the general public, please remember not to use exact dates. The same applies if you have a presence on the internet for example a Facebook profile, blog or other social networking sites.

There are many opportunities to share your story. If you are interested in doing so, please contact ODNZ’s Communications Advisor (09) 360 0935 or email donornz@adhb.govt.nz.

ODNZ’s most important message is for people to talk to their families about their wishes.



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