



EYE DONATION MONTH FACTS

November 2026 is Eye Donation Month, and Iowa Lions Eye Bank, along with the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA), EBAA member eye banks, and fellow transplantation community partners are raising awareness about the life-transforming opportunities that are created through eye donation.

During Eye Donation Month, we spread the word about cornea donation and transplantation, honor selfless donors who gave the gift of sight, celebrate recipients whose lives have been transformed, educate others about donations, and encourage individuals to register as donors. This year's theme, "It Only Takes a Minute," emphasizes how quick and easy it is to register as a donor, tell others about your decision, make a referral, and/or say thank you to all those who help preserve and restore sight.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Eye Banks, including Iowa Lions Eye Bank, are organizations that recover, evaluate, process, and distribute ocular tissue donated by caring individuals for use in corneal transplantation, research, and education.**
- **The whole eye can be donated for use in research and education.** This can potentially help untold thousands of people regain their sight as researchers develop new understanding of the causes and effects of eye conditions that lead to blindness.
- **The whole eye cannot be transplanted;** instead, only the cornea (the clear, dome-shaped surface that covers the front of the eye) is replaced, restoring sight for those with cornea-related blindness. One person can restore the sight of two people through transplantation.
- **Nearly anyone can be an eye donor.** Unlike organ donation, blood types do not have to match. It doesn't matter how old you are, the color of your eyes, or the quality of your vision. Aside from those suffering from infections and a few highly communicable diseases, most individuals are suitable donors.
- **Eye, tissue, and organ donor registration can be completed in a variety of ways.** You can register via iowalionseyebank.org, registerme.org, the iPhone

health app, using MyChart at many Iowa hospitals, signing up for your driver's permit or license through the Iowa Department of Transportation, or signing up for your hunting, fishing or trapping license through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

- **It is important for prospective donors to notify loved ones of their decision to donate.** Your family's cooperation during a medical/social history interview is required before transplantation, so it's crucial that they know of your wishes to be a donor. Also, if a person does not pass away in a hospital, someone must notify Iowa Donor Network as soon as possible after a death occurs, by phoning 1-800-831-4131, for the donation process to begin. Iowa Lions Eye Bank contracts with Iowa Donor Network to run a single referral service for all prospective eye, organ, and tissue donations in the state of Iowa.
- **Although Iowa Donor Network and Iowa Lions Eye Bank work closely together, they are two separate nonprofit organizations.** In fact, Iowa Lions Eye Bank predates Iowa Donor Network by nearly 40 years. Iowa Lions Eye Bank was founded in 1955 at what was then known as University Hospital in Iowa City, thanks to a \$10,000 initial donation from the Iowa Lions Clubs. Iowa Lions Eye Bank is still proudly part of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the University of Iowa Health Care.
- **The lifetime economic benefit of corneal transplants is valued at \$8.6 billion.** With a corneal transplant, an individual avoids the direct costs that come with vision loss such as higher routine medical expenses, long-term care expenditures, and the indirect impact of potential years of lost productivity to both the patient and their caregivers. Eye disorders are the fifth costliest medical issue to the U.S. economy after heart disease, cancer, emotional disorders, and pulmonary conditions.
- **Since 1961, Iowa Lions Eye Bank and other EBAA eye banks have restored sight for more than 2.5 million individuals worldwide.** Currently there are an estimated 12 million people around the world suffering from corneal blindness that may be corrected with a corneal transplant.
- **The success rate of corneal transplantation is greater than 95%.**

If you have any further questions, **please visit iowalionseyebank.org or email us at info@iowalionseyebank.org**