Sydney Brain Bank

NeuRA volunteers brain donor program

The Sydney Brain Bank, based at Neuroscience Research Australia, is a unique collection of more than 900 brains and tissue samples that contributes to research studies all over the world. Our donors know they are contributing to greater understanding of a host of neurodegenerative conditions.

Donating your brain after death is a vital contribution to understanding how the nervous system changes with age, and how these changes relate to neurological disease. Your donation may help improve the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of conditions that affect millions of people.

What is the NeuRA Volunteers Brain Donor Program?

The NeuRA Volunteers Brain Donor Program is dedicated to understanding how the brain and spinal cord change with age – both in healthy ageing and in neurodegenerative disease. By combining data collected during life with detailed examination of brain tissue after death, researchers can better understand how the brain functions and how it changes over time.

Who can become a donor?

This program is open to healthy volunteers aged over 60 years, as most age-related brain changes occur after this age. People with some with some infectious diseases, such as HIV or Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, unfortunately cannot be included. If you have a diagnosed neurological condition, there are other brain donor programs that may be more suitable. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to find out more about other programs.

What is brain and spinal cord donation?

Donating your brain and spinal cord to medical research involves removal of this tissue after death. This allows researchers to study microscopic changes that cannot be detected in any other way.

Will donation affect funeral arrangements?

Removal of brain and spinal cord tissue is carried out as soon as possible by highly trained professionals. The procedure is performed with great care and respect, and there are minimal visible signs afterwards. It does not delay funeral arrangements or prevent an open casket viewing, if that is desired.

Are there any costs involved?

No, any additional costs involved in transferring the body for donation will be billed directly to the Sydney Brain Bank.

Why is donation important?

The program focuses on age-related changes in the brain and how these affect function. Tissue from healthy individuals are vital for comparison with those affected by disease. Understanding these changes can help scientists develop strategies to diagnose, prevent or treat neurological disease.

Why consider donating tissue?

Donating your brain and spinal cord is an extraordinary and enduring contribution to science. It supports research that may one day benefit many people. There is a critical shortage of this type of tissue, especially from people without neurological disease. These donations are vital for understanding how the healthy brain ages and for comparing with those affected by disease.

Making the decision to become a donor

We understand that deciding to donate your brain and spinal cord is deeply personal. We encourage you to discuss your wishes with your loved ones before enrolling. This ensures your family understands and supports your decision. Once you've had this discussion, we'll provide more detailed information and consent forms to complete and return.

What does becoming a donor involve?

As a registered donor, we'll also ask for information about your medical and family history and invite you to complete occasional health surveys. This will help build a detailed picture of your physical and mental health over time.

What happens to the tissue?

All tissue is handled with the utmost care and respect by the Sydney Brain Bank at NeuRA. It is securely stored and made available to approved researchers across Australia and internationally, for ethically approved studies. Research may include genetic analysis or the study of cellular and molecular changes in the tissue.

When will the donation occur?

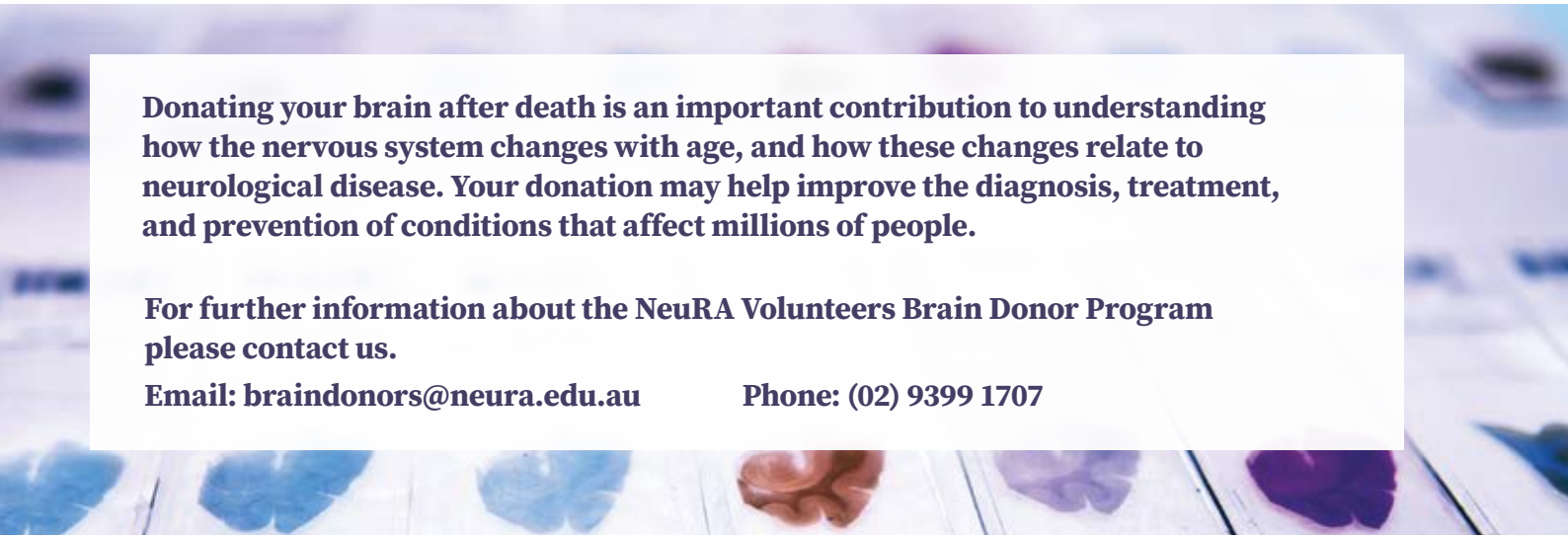
The brain and spinal cord will be removed as soon as possible after death, typically within 48 hours.

Why is spinal cord tissue requested?

The spinal cord contains nerve cells that help us move, feel, and respond to the world. Some neurological diseases, such as motor neuron disease, affect both the brain and spinal cord. While spinal cord donation is more involved than brain donation alone, it offers valuable insights. Some donors choose to donate brain tissue only, and that is entirely acceptable.

Is brain and spinal cord donation the same as organ donation?

No, this donation is for research purposes only, not for transplantation. It requires separate consent and coordination. You can still donate your brain and spinal cord even if you are an organ or body donor.



Donating your brain after death is an important contribution to understanding how the nervous system changes with age, and how these changes relate to neurological disease. Your donation may help improve the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of conditions that affect millions of people.

For further information about the NeuRA Volunteers Brain Donor Program please contact us.

Email: braindonors@neura.edu.au **Phone: (02) 9399 1707**

Neuroscience Research Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, medical research institute tackling the brain health challenges that shape our lives. Our aim is to protect and support brain health at every stage of life and prevent loss of function wherever possible, prioritising early intervention, personalised care and improved quality of life.

NeuRA
Discover — Conquer — Cure

Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health or personal advice. Always seek the guidance of your doctor or other qualified health professional with any questions you may have regarding your health or a medical condition.

If you are concerned in any way about the conduct of this research, you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2052. Phone: (02) 9385 6222 Email: humanethics@unsw.edu.au