For the Donor’s relative:
You have the authority and moral responsibility to donate the eyes of the deceased
1. Close the eyelids of the deceased with moist cotton wool.
2. Switch off the fan & switch on the air conditioner if possible.
3. Contact the nearest eye bank as quickly as possible.
4. Give the correct address with specific landmarks and telephone number to enable the eye bank team locate the place easily
5. If the death certificate from the physician is available, keep it ready.
6. Eye donation can be done only with the written consent of the next of kin in the presence of two witnesses.
7. Raise the head of the deceased slightly by placing a pillow underneath.

19. What happens after eye donation?
- The donor’s family receives a certificate of appreciation from the eye bank.
- The eyes are taken to the eye bank and evaluated by a trained eye bank staff.
- Tests are carried out and the tissue is sent to the corneal surgeon.
- The waiting list is referred and the recipient is called for corneal transplant.
- Corneal transplant is performed.
- Periodic follow-up of the recipient is done over time to ensure that the graft is successful.

Facts about Eye Donation:
- Eyes must be removed within 4 - 6 hours after death.
- Only a Registered Medical Practitioner can remove eyes from a deceased.
- The eye bank team will remove the eyes from the home of the deceased or from a hospital.
- Eye removal does not delay the funeral since the entire procedure takes 20-30 minutes only.
- A small quantity of blood will be drawn to rule out communicable diseases.
- Eye retrieval does not cause disfigurement.
- Religions are for eye donation.
- Eyes can be donated only after death.
- The identities of both the donor and the recipient are kept confidential.
Do You Know...
There are approximately 1.2 crore blind people in India. Of these around 11 lakh corneal blind are in need of corneal transplantation. As against an annual requirement of 1,00,000 corneas, only 25,000 corneas are used in India at present.

FAQS (Frequently asked Questions):

1. What is an eye bank?
   • An eye bank is the link between the donor and recipient/eye surgeon. It is an organization recognized by government to collect and distribute human eyes to those who require cornea transplants.

2. What is corneal blindness?
   • Cornea, the main focusing part of the eye, is the clear front surface of the eye. Like a “window”, it allows light to enter the eye. Vision could be markedly reduced or lost if the cornea becomes “cloudy” or scarred. This condition is known as corneal blindness.

3. What are the causes of corneal blindness?
   • Injuries to the eye, birth defects, malnutrition, infections, chemical burns, congenital disorders and complications of eye surgery.

4. Who can donate eyes?
   • Eye donors could be of any age group or sex.
   • People who use spectacles, diabetics, patients with high blood pressure, asthma patients and those without communicable diseases can donate eyes.
   • Persons with AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, Rabies, Septicaemia, Acute leukemia (Blood cancer), Tetanus, Cholera, and infectious diseases like Meningitis and Encephalitis cannot donate eyes.

5. Do cataracts or the use of spectacles render the corneas unfit?
   • No. Both these conditions relate to the lens of the eye and not the cornea.

6. Do religious authorities approve of donating one’s eyes?
   • Yes. All religious faiths support this vital sight restoration program.

7. Is the whole eye used for transplant?
   • No. Only the thin transparent layer called the cornea is used for transplant.

8. What is cornea?
   • The cornea is the clear surface at the front of the eye and is the main focusing element. Should the cornea become cloudy from disease, injury, infection or any other cause, vision will be drastically reduced.

9. What is a cornea transplant?
   • The cornea transplant is the surgical procedure which replaces a disc-shaped segment of an impaired cornea with a similarly shaped piece of a healthy donor cornea. More than 90 of cornea transplant operations successfully restore the recipient’s vision.

10. How can I become a donor?
    • A donor card can serve as an indication to your family, your legal representative and hospitals of your intention to be an eye donor.
    • Prospective donors should indicate their intention on donor cards and driver’s licenses. Perhaps the most important single thing you can do is make your next-of-kin aware of your wishes to make sure they are carried out.

11. Is there any use for corneas which are for some reason unfit for transplant?
    Corneas that, for technical reasons, are not used for vision restoring corneal transplant, are invaluable for research.

12. How quickly should eyes be removed after death?
    As soon as possible, but eyes can be removed up to 6 - 8 hours after death.

13. Is it necessary to transport the donor to the hospital after death?
    No. Eyebanks have personnel who will come to the donor’s home and remove the eyes. The procedure takes about 30-40 minutes.

14. How will my donation be used?
    After the eyes are removed, they will be evaluated, processed, screened and then supplied to the eye surgeon for transplant.

15. Will the donor’s family pay or receive any fees?
    No. It is illegal to buy and sell human eyes, organs and tissues. Any costs associated with eye procurement are absorbed by the eye bank.

16. Will the recipients be told the identity of the donor?
    No. Donor anonymity is strictly preserved by law.

17. How do I contact an Eye Bank?
    A special number 1919 (B.S.N.L.) has been allotted to eye banks. Most eye banks in India have been allocated this number. On receiving information regarding a person’s death, the eye bank sends its team to collect the eyes. One can also call this number to receive details about the donation procedure.

18. How to donate eyes?
    For Donors:
    1. Discuss your intention of eye donation with your family doctor and relatives.
    2. The eye bank has registration cards.
    3. Fill your details in the registration cards.
    4. Keep one part of the card in your wallet/ purse.
    5. Place the second part of the card at home and inform all members of your family about your precious gift to society.