

# Understanding Your Skin

## Donated Skin Saves Lives

(NAPSA)—How much do you really know about the skin you're in? Skin is the body's largest organ—and like other organs, it can be donated to save lives, scientists say.

Skin protects us from bacterial invaders, cools us down and heats us up, holds in fluid and, under normal conditions, can mend itself. If skin is too badly burned, however, it is unable to repair itself without help. One way to promote healing is by covering a wound with allografts—skin from an organ donor.

Techniques developed by Conrado Bondoc, M.D., and John Burke, M.D., at the Boston Shriners burn hospital in the late 1960s allow viable donor skin to be effectively frozen and stored for long periods. Their work resulted in the Boston Shriners Hospital establishing the first skin bank. In addition, the two doctors' techniques are now being used in skin banks worldwide.

Skin is procured from a deceased organ donor, just like any other donated organ. In order for tissue to be useful, it must be removed within hours of death and the donor's age and health history must meet certain criteria. Donor skin is treated in a glycerol solution, frozen and stored in tanks of liquid nitrogen until needed by surgeons. Skin treated in this manner can be stored for five years or more.

"It is our hope that more organ donors will consider donating skin," says Phil Walters, skin bank director at the Boston Shriners Hospital. "Most states provide the opportunity to become an organ donor at the time



**Boston Shriners Hospital skin bank technician Jim Maher processes donated skin for freezing and storage.**

drivers' licenses are renewed. There is no charge to either the donor's estate or the next of kin for donating skin, it should cause no delay in funeral arrangements and, like any other organ or blood donation, someone's life could be saved by your thoughtfulness." More information about skin and organ donation is available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit the Web site at [www.shrinershq.org](http://www.shrinershq.org). Treatment is provided to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States, or call 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.