

Frequently Asked Questions

What is BODY WORLDS?

The BODY WORLDS exhibitions are first-of-their-kind exhibitions through which visitors learn about anatomy, physiology, and health by viewing real human bodies, using an extraordinary process called plastination a groundbreaking method for specimen preservation invented by Dr. von Hagens in 1977.

Each exhibition features more than 100 real human specimens, including whole-body plastinates, individual organs, blood vessel configurations and transparent body slices. The exhibitions also allow visitors to see and better understand the long-term impact of diseases, the effects of tobacco consumption and the mechanics of artificial supports. To date, more than 47 million people around the world have viewed the BODY WORLDS exhibits.

What is the purpose of the exhibition?

The BODY WORLDS exhibitions aim to educate the public about the inner workings of the human body and show the effects of poor health, good health and lifestyle choices. They are also meant to create interest in and increase knowledge of anatomy and physiology among the public.

Couldn't I learn just as much from books or models of human anatomy?

Real human bodies show the details of disease and anatomy that cannot be shown with models. They also allow us to understand how each body has its own unique features, even on the inside. Visitors are drawn to real specimens in a way that they are not to plastic models. One of the special features of museums and science centres is that they offer people a chance to see the real thing in a safe and informative environment.

What is plastination?

Invented by scientist and anatomist Dr. Gunther von Hagens in 1977, plastination is the groundbreaking method of halting decomposition and preserving anatomical specimens for scientific and medical education. Plastination is the process of extracting all bodily fluids and soluble fat from specimens, replacing them through vacuum forced impregnation with reactive resins and elastomers, and then curing them with light, heat, or certain gases, which give the specimens rigidity and permanence.

Where did the specimens on display come from?**Will we know who the plastinates are or how they died?**

The BODY WORLDS exhibitions rely on the generosity of body donors; individuals who bequeathed that, upon their death, their bodies could be used for educational purposes in the exhibitions. Currently, the Institute for Plastination has a donor roster more than 18,000 individuals, 2,200 are already deceased.

All of the whole body plastinates and the majority of the specimens are from these body donors; some specific specimens that show unusual conditions come from old anatomical collections and morphological institutes. As agreed upon by the body donors, their identities and causes of death are not provided. The exhibitions focus on the nature of our bodies, not on providing personal information.

Why are the plastinates posed the way they are?

The poses of the plastinates have been carefully thought out and serve educational aims. Each plastinate is posed to illustrate different anatomical features. For instance, the athletic poses illustrate the use of muscle systems while playing sports. The poses allow the visitor to relate the plastinate to his or her own body.

Will I be able to touch any of the plastinates?

While you will be able to get very close to the plastinates, as a rule, visitors are not allowed to touch them.

Are these exhibitions appropriate for children?

More than 47 million people, including young children, have viewed the BODY WORLDS exhibitions around the world. It is important to note that the exhibition includes full-body plastinates with exposed genitals. We recommend the BODY WORLDS exhibits for school groups in grades 5 and up.

Why is it important for the public to see these exhibits?

We believe that when people understand more about how the body works and how it can break down, they are more likely to choose healthy and sustainable lifestyles. We also hope it will inspire visitors to learn more about the life sciences. Knowledge about what the human body looks like and how it functions is basic life science information that should be available to everyone.

How long can I stay inside the exhibits?

You can stay as long as you like, but we recommend allowing yourself about one to two hours. The length of time will vary on how long each visitor wishes to examine each specimen and read the information provided.

Are food and drink permitted in BODY WORLDS?

Food and drink are not permitted in the exhibit galleries. The policy helps to protect the BODY WORLDS plastinates.