

BLOOD DONATION INFORMATION

Please read this information carefully today. You will be asked to sign that you have read and understood the contents.

THE DONATION PROCESS

Registration

When you volunteer to give blood you will be asked to register with the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS). We ask you for your name, address, date of birth and telephone numbers. This information is entered on the IBTS computerised donor database and is used by us to communicate with you (e.g. to send invitation letters to future blood donor clinics).

Information related to you and your blood donations is stored securely on our database - see section entitled Data Protection. If you have given blood before and you are on our computer database, you will be asked to confirm that your details are correct.

Medical Screening

Each time you attend to give blood you will be asked about specific aspects of your medical history and asked to fill in a health and lifestyle questionnaire. **We ask that you read the questionnaire and information provided thoroughly. All the information you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence.** New donors, or donors who have not given blood in the last two years, will be interviewed by a doctor or nurse in an area that provides as much privacy as the setting allows.

You will be asked to declare:

- That you have read/listened to, understood and completed the health and lifestyle questionnaire and that all the information you provided is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge.

- That you have read/listened to and understood this information and the Blood Safety information.
- That you understand the nature of the donation process and the possible risks involved in giving blood - see section entitled Possible Complications of Giving Blood.

and to give consent:

- For your blood to be tested for HIV and other infectious agents – see section entitled Testing Blood Donations.
- For your blood to be used for the benefit of patients – see sections entitled Using Blood for Research and Development and Use of Plasma.

For medical or other reasons it may not be possible to accept a donation from you. In these circumstances we will explain the reason(s) for our decision to you. We may ask for your permission to contact your General Practitioner (GP) for further details.



What if I Change My Mind?

If you are accepted for donation but decide, for whatever reason, that you would rather not do so, you can change your mind and leave the clinic at any time. We will not put any pressure on you to donate. We simply ask that you return your questionnaire to a member of our staff.

If you have already donated and you have doubts about whether your blood should be used for patients, please talk to a doctor or nurse at the clinic. If you have left the clinic, please phone the National Blood Centre on 01 4322800, or the Munster Regional Transfusion Centre on 021 4807400 as soon as possible and ask to speak with a doctor. There is a doctor on call 24 hours a day. Please do **not** leave a message on our Infoline 1850 731 137 as this is not manned 24/7 and the information you give us may mean that your blood is not suitable for patients and has to be recalled from the hospital immediately.

Giving blood too often can lead to low levels of iron in your body. This can occur because every unit of blood contains between 200 - 250 mgs of iron. For your safety we recommend that you do not donate blood more than 4 times a year. For some donors a lesser number of donations may be appropriate.

Giving Blood

After the medical screening process, you will be shown to one of the donation beds. A pressure cuff will be put around your upper arm to make the veins more prominent and the area will be cleaned with antiseptic. A doctor, nurse or specially trained donor attendant will then insert a needle that is attached to a blood bag. Your blood will then flow through this needle into the blood bag that is kept out of sight below the level of the bed. You will be asked to open and close your hand to ensure smooth and consistent blood flow. Blood samples are collected in tubes at the time of donation so that we can test them in our laboratory.

If your blood passes this test, we will be able to accept a donation right away.

Haemoglobin Testing

Haemoglobin (Hb) is the protein in your blood that carries oxygen. We test a small drop of blood from your finger to make sure that you are not anaemic (i.e. that your Hb is low). If this test indicates that you may be anaemic, a blood sample may be taken from your arm for an additional Hb test. If your blood passes this test, we will be able to accept a donation straight away.

If not, the sample will go back to the Blood Centre for further testing. We will get back in touch with you if the result indicates that you should attend your GP for further advice. On occasion we also take a sample from your donation to confirm your Hb level.

A member of staff will keep a close eye on you and on the blood bag to make sure that everything is going well. Most people fill the blood bag in 8 to 15 minutes. It holds 470 mls of blood (just under a pint). If, for any reason, the blood flow is slow, it may be necessary to stop the donation early. **If you experience any pain or discomfort where the needle is inserted bring this to the immediate attention of a member of staff.**

When the donation is completed, the needle will then be carefully removed from your arm and a dressing applied. **You will be asked to press directly and firmly on the site where the needle was inserted for 2 to 3 minutes, keeping your**

arm straight. This is important in helping to prevent bruising.

There is no risk of contracting any disease by donating blood. A new sterile blood pack is used for every donor. It is never reused.

Resting

You will then be advised to rest for a short period before going to the canteen area where you will be offered a drink and light refreshments. We advise that you remain in the blood

company with your details and the details of the incident.

Bruising

Sometimes bruises develop after giving blood due to seepage of blood from the vein into the tissues of the arm. Bruises are not usually serious. Most are small and fade within a few days. On occasion the bruising may worsen and become painful. Very occasionally a bruise may become infected and you may need treatment with antibiotics.

I don't have to but it feels good to do my bit.



donor clinic for at least 15 minutes after your donation to make sure that you are feeling well.

Possible Complications of Giving Blood

For the vast majority of people the process of giving blood is a very simple and trouble-free experience. However, problems sometimes arise during or after a donation. We have outlined some complications of giving blood here, so that if they occur, you will know what to do. **We ask that you let one of our staff know immediately if you feel faint or unwell during or after your donation or if you have pain, discomfort or altered sensation in your arm.** If you do have a problem, we are required to report this to our insurance

To minimise the risk of bruising, we ask you to press firmly on the needle site for at least 2 - 3 minutes after the needle is removed. We also ask that you limit the use of your donation arm for the first 15 minutes after giving blood. Ideally you should avoid using the arm from which the donation was taken for heavy work or recreational activities for a period of 12 hours.

If you experience any of the following after donating you should contact the National Blood Centre on 01 4322800 or the Munster Regional Transfusion Centre on 021 4807400 or contact your GP:

- Severe pain in your arm
- Numbness or persistent 'pins and needles' in your arm, hand or fingers

- Swelling that is large or increasing in size
- Painful redness or inflammation.

Bleeding from the needle site

If this happens immediately after giving blood:

- Lift your arm above your shoulder and press on the needle site.
- Sit down and ask for assistance from our staff.

You can avoid bleeding by pressing firmly on the needle site after the needle is taken out and by limiting the use of your donation arm for 15 minutes after giving blood. Be careful when eating and drinking and when putting on your coat after donating.

Please leave the plaster in place for 24 hours after donating.

Fainting/feeling weak or light-headed

Some donors feel faint during or after giving blood. **If you feel faint during or after your donation please let one of our staff know immediately.**

If you feel faint after leaving the clinic you should sit down straight away (on the ground if necessary). Put your head between your knees for a few minutes. Lie down if you need to. Stay sitting or lying for around 30 minutes or until you feel well again. Make sure that when you get up you do so slowly. If you still feel faint, lie down again.

Have a cold non-alcoholic drink when you feel well enough to do so. If you lose consciousness (pass out) after donating contact us on the above numbers for further advice. We generally advise that donors who lose consciousness after they leave the

blood donor clinic, do not donate again, in the interests of their own safety.

Reducing the risk of fainting

Before giving blood we advise that you:

- Eat something in the 3 hours before you donate
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquid before attending the donor clinic
- Drink a glass of water / juice at the clinic before you donate
- If you have naturally low blood pressure and feel faint when you stand up suddenly, please tell us
- If you are very anxious, please let us know, so that we can help you feel at ease.

After giving blood we advise that you:

- Stay in our clinic for at least 15 minutes after donating
- Have some light refreshments in our canteen during this time
- Do not smoke for at least an hour
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Do not have a hot bath on the day you donate
- Avoid standing for long periods especially in poorly ventilated areas
- Avoid strenuous exercise until the next day
- Avoid any activity that may present a hazard to you or others were you to become weak or light-headed.

If you are involved in a hazardous occupation or hobby such as operating heavy machinery or mountaineering, you should defer the activity until the next day or sometimes longer. Please check with us, so that we can advise you appropriately if this applies to you.

Uncommon risks of donating blood

Nerve Injury/Nerve irritation/Pain

We ask that you let one of our staff know immediately if you have pain, discomfort or altered sensation in your arm, during or after your donation.

Very infrequently, insertion of the needle may cause inflammation in your arm or irritation of a nerve. Our staff are fully trained to recognise these rare complications, and you will be given immediate treatment and appropriate advice. If these occur after you have left the blood donor clinic, you should contact us on the above numbers or contact your GP.

Tendon Injury/Pain

On rare occasions a needle may come into contact with a tendon and cause a sharp pain when the needle is inserted. Please tell us immediately if you experience any pain or discomfort when the needle is inserted.

Arterial puncture

Rarely the needle may inadvertently be inserted into an artery. If this happens the needle will be removed immediately and you will be given immediate treatment and appropriate advice.

Fast pulse or tightness in the chest

Very rarely a donor may develop a faster than normal pulse or a sensation of tightness in the chest. If this happens while giving blood, alert us immediately.

Serious complications resulting in injury or hospitalisation

We collect around 160,000 donations of blood every year. About once or twice a year a donor may need to be admitted to hospital as a result of a complication of giving blood. This could occur, if for example, a donor faints and bangs his/

her head resulting in an injury.

Serious injuries can occur if a donor faints after he/she has left the blood donor clinic. This is called a 'delayed faint.' The risk of a delayed faint will be greatly reduced by following the steps outlined above to reduce the risk of fainting.

If you become unwell after donating

If you become unwell or develop any illness after donating or have any doubts about whether your blood should be used for patients, it is essential that you talk to a doctor at the National Blood Centre on 01 4322800 or the Munster Regional Transfusion Centre on 021 4807400 as soon as possible. There is a doctor on call 24 hours a day who will advise you and will decide if your blood is suitable to give to patients.

Please do **not** leave a message on our Infoline 1850 731 137 as this is not manned 24/7 and the information you give us may mean that your blood is not suitable for patients and has to be recalled from the hospital immediately.

Testing Blood Donations

Certain tests are performed on every donation, no matter how many times you have given blood. Currently the mandatory tests are those for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HTLV (a virus carried in the blood) and syphilis.

If your blood gives a positive result for any of these infections your donation will be discarded and you will not be eligible to donate again. We will write and inform you and ask that you attend for further confirmatory tests and advice.

The IBTS is legally bound to inform the Public Health Authorities if your tests confirm that you are positive for hepatitis B or hepatitis C or syphilis. We are

obliged to forward your personal details including your name and address and the results of your blood tests.

Your blood is also tested to determine your blood group. In addition supplementary tests may be carried out on selected donations, for example to meet the special needs of certain patients such as babies. These extra tests include more detailed blood grouping, a test for sickle cell trait and, very occasionally, tests for other relevant proteins in the blood. We will notify you of any results that may affect your health. The range of blood tests carried out by the IBTS is under regular review and other tests may be introduced in the future. We freeze a small sample of your blood and retain it indefinitely. This is done in case it becomes necessary to carry out additional tests at a later date.

False Reactions in our Tests

We have to carry out a range of tests on each donation. In a small percentage of donors, the donor's blood gives a false reaction in our tests (a false positive reaction). Whilst there are no health implications for the donor, such testing problems prevent use of the blood. You will be informed of such false reactions if they occur. For further information see our leaflet on False Positive Reactions.

Using Blood for Research and Development

We would like donors to know that, on occasion, their blood may be used for purposes other than direct transfusion to patients. We sometimes use parts of donations that are not given to patients such as white cells, or donations that have not been used within their shelf life, for laboratory work, education and training, or for research and development within the IBTS, the Health

Service or the Universities/Institutes of Technology. The IBTS does not receive any payment for this service.

As part of our commitment to a high quality service, on occasion, donations that are within their shelf life are used for validation/quality assurance purposes within the IBTS. This could happen for example, when a new blood pack or filter is introduced to ensure that it meets all the required standards. Another example would be where donated blood or blood samples are used to validate test kits and equipment and in the assessment of a new blood screening test. These samples may also be used to provide information for donors on the risk of screening positive in a new test, or to provide estimates of the rate of other infections in the population. If part of a donation or samples is used for these purposes, we will ensure, where appropriate, that you cannot be identified so that there is no link between any personally identifiable data and the sample (unlinked, anonymised testing) and that approval from an ethics committee is obtained where necessary.

Using blood in all of the above ways is of benefit to patients. By signing the Donor Declaration on the health and lifestyle questionnaire you are giving consent to proceed with the donation and that your donation may be used for any of the purposes outlined above.

We would also like our donors to know that at times their blood is not used. This may happen if the donation was not a complete donation or if the donation is not used before its expiry date.

Use of plasma

Every whole blood donation is made up of red cells, white cells and platelets, which are suspended in plasma,

the liquid portion of blood. Patients requiring blood transfusions are given a component, usually red cells or platelets. Since 2001, the IBTS has not used plasma from Irish donors, because of a risk of transmitting vCJD through this particular component. Plasma for Irish patients is imported from the USA which is a BSE low risk area. The US donors are voluntary unpaid donors and their plasma is manufactured into a licensed product.

As plasma from Irish donors is not given to patients, it is disposed of through incineration. Plasma can be used in other ways that indirectly benefit patients, for example in ethically approved medical research, quality control or for teaching purposes.

Recently, the IBTS has agreed to supply the waste material, plasma (currently incinerated at a cost) to the manufacturing sector for use in preparing healthcare related laboratory tests. The IBTS will receive payment from this collaboration which will help to offset some IBTS costs and is therefore of benefit to the health service.

The IBTS believes that it is important that donors know how their blood donations may be used, including what happens to surplus/waste components from the processing of your life saving gift.

Data Protection

The IBTS holds donor details, donation details and test results on a secure computerised database. This database is used by the IBTS to communicate with donors and to record their donation details, including all blood sample test results. It is also used for the proper and necessary administration of the IBTS. All the information held is treated with the strictest confidence.

This information may also be used for research in order to improve our knowledge about the blood donor population, and for clinical audit, to assess and improve the quality of our service. Wherever possible, all such information will be anonymised. All information and data that is processed by the IBTS is in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts. You have a right of access to your donor records. If you want to access your records, contact Donor Services at the National Blood Centre on 01 4322800 or Munster Regional Transfusion Centre on 021 4807400.

Further Information

If you have a question at any time you can phone our Infoline on 1850 731 137. This is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can also visit our website on www.giveblood.ie or email us at contactus@ibts.ie. Details of our clinics are available on our website.

If you need any information or have a query while you are at the blood donor clinic please speak with a member of our clinic staff.