

# How do I become a blood donor and save lives?



**1 in 4 people will need a blood transfusion at some point in our life with over 3,000 donations needed every week in Ireland.**

**Most people agree you should and do intend to give blood – but only 3% of the eligible population are active blood donors**

[giveblood.ie](https://giveblood.ie)

## BEFORE ATTENDING THE CLINIC

### **Check your eligibility prior to attending the clinic**

Unfortunately, not everybody can give blood. It is important that you are well and healthy when you come to donate blood. An illness or injury, however minor, may mean it is not safe to give your blood to a sick patient. Certain medications can also be harmful to patients. Recent travel to foreign countries may also mean that you may not be eligible temporarily to donate.

You can take the quick 2 minute blood eligibility quiz on our website [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie) which outlines the main reasons why someone might not be able to give blood.

In addition, there is a FAQ 'Can I give blood' section for more complicated queries, You can also call our donor line at 1850 731 137. When you attend a clinic, you will also have an opportunity to speak in confidence with a nurse.

### **Reduce your risk of fainting**

It is important you eat something substantial in the 3 hours prior to your donation. Drinking plenty of cold, non-alcoholic fluids in the 24 hours prior to donating and eating savoury food and /or salty snacks the night before donation will greatly reduce the risk of fainting during or after donating.

### **Bring Photo ID / Bringing children to the clinic**

All Donors are requested to bring Photo ID. This helps maintain blood safety by verifying donor's identity before donating.

A donating adult cannot be the sole supervisor of any children on clinic under 13 years of age. Please ensure that there is another adult designated to supervise any child who is less than 13 years of age during each part of the donation process.

### **Make an appointment**

All clinics are by appointment so you must contact the relevant IBTS number to make an appointment. Although a donation only takes approximately 8 minutes, you will need to allow on average 60-75 minutes for the entire process, i.e. from the time you register to resting afterwards while enjoying refreshments.

## **Does exercise stop me giving blood?**

You can give blood once you are well hydrated and have had adequate rest. This means it is generally advisable you don't exercise on the day of donation. You should be ok to train the day before and after a donation once well hydrated and rested.

Some exceptions are:

- a)** You cannot give blood for 2 weeks before or after extreme exercise e.g. a full marathon/triathlon
- b)** You should be cautious about exercise or an important upcoming match within 24 hours if you experienced an unlikely adverse effect on clinic e.g. avoid physical impact or weights the day after clinic if you experienced a bruised or painful arm, or fainting after donating.

## **WHAT HAPPENS AT THE CLINIC**

### **Registration**

We take your details (name, address, date of birth and telephone numbers etc) and register you in our database.

### **Pre Donation Questionnaire**

Every time you attend a clinic to donate blood, you will be given a copy of our Health and Lifestyle Questionnaire to complete.

### **Screening Questionnaire and Donor Interview**

You will then have an interview with a trained healthcare professional to determine if you are eligible to donate.

It is vitally important that you answer each question with honesty and accuracy to ensure that it's safe for you to donate and that it's safe for a sick person to receive your blood. All information that you provide is confidential.

### **Haemoglobin Testing**

If you are eligible to donate, a small drop of blood is taken from your fingertip to ensure your Haemoglobin Hb level is in range to give blood. If your Hb reading is out of range, you may be offered an alternative venesection test to determine your Hb level more accurately. You can improve your Haemoglobin/Iron levels by eating iron rich foods like meat and spinach. In order to absorb the iron, be sure to include vitamin C rich foods to your diet.

## **Donation**

A needle attached to a blood pack is inserted into one of the veins in your forearm. Your donation is collected into this pack. In addition, small blood samples are collected from this pack during the donation, and these are tested in the laboratory post-donation. 470mls of blood is collected during the donation, and this takes approximately 8 minutes. You will be closely monitored by a staff member during this time.

## **Rest and Snack**

You are advised to remain in the donation clinic for at least 15 minutes after donating. This time is spent in the canteen area where you will be given refreshments. It is important to drink cold fluids post donation in order to rehydrate yourself. You will be given a card with post donation advice.

## **What if I am not allowed give blood**

There are many reasons why you may not be eligible to donate that day, and the reason will be fully explained to you, and you will be advised when you can return to donate. It's normal – on any given day, 20% of donors are unable to give blood at a clinic.

While we understand this may be disappointing, we would encourage all donors to return to give blood when we notify them by text that they are eligible again prior to their next clinic. You are vital to helping us maintain the blood supply to the hospitals.

## **WHAT ABOUT AFTER THE CLINIC?**

### **If you feel unwell within 28 days of attending**

If you become unwell within 4 weeks of donating you must contact the IBTS as soon as you become unwell. The reason for this is that any future illness may have consequences for the patient that has received or will receive your blood donation.

### **Next attendance**

You can donate every 90 days if you are eligible. When you are next eligible, the IBTS will contact you by text message with information about the next clinic in your area, or if this doesn't suit you, you can find a clinic on our website.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The UK vCJD residency ban is no longer in effect. Thus people who resided in the UK between 1980-1996, previously unable to give blood, can now do so if they meet all other blood donation criteria.
- You must be between 18-65 to give blood for the first time. If you are 65-69, and you have donated in the past 10 years, you can give blood. If you are 70 years or over, you must have donated in the past two years and obtain an annual medical certificate of fitness from your GP. During Covid-19 Over 70's are unfortunately unable to give blood.
- You can give blood if you had Jaundice (Hepatitis A) before you were 13 years old. If it was after you turned 13, it will depend on what it was associated with.
- You can give blood four months after receiving a tattoo.
- Many Hereditary Haemochromatosis (HH) patients can now become regular blood donors at all blood donation clinics nationwide once they meet specific Haemochromatosis management criteria and standard blood donation criteria. For more specific information, visit [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)
- Donors born outside Ireland and the UK will have a sample taken at their first donation clinic, and if eligible will be contacted as normal by text message about the next available clinic. It is important donors check whether their country of birth precludes them giving blood under current eligibility criteria.
- O Negative blood group (and B- and A-) donors are always in great demand. O- donors represent 8% of the population but account for 15% of all blood issued to hospitals because their blood is universal and can be given to any patient.
- IBTS also needs to collect approx. 450 platelets donations weekly at our Apheresis fixed centre clinics in St James, Dublin and St Finbarrs Cork. Platelet donors can give every 28 days. Maximum age is 45 years, with male donors in particular required.
- IBTS manages the Bone Marrow / Stem Cell Registry database. To join the bone marrow registry you need to be a blood donor between the ages 18-25.

- A typical unit of blood lasts for just 35 days, and in some cases, such as blood used for very young children, must be used within 5 days of its collection.
- Nobody likes needles! Fear of needles is a major reason why most people say they will not give blood. We understand that and that is why we train our staff to put you at ease and monitor you during your donation. Our staff collect 150,000 donations every year so they are well practiced and many donors realise their fears were unfounded when they start giving blood. To help, sometimes it can help to attend a clinic with a friend.

### **Not sure about attending a clinic?**

90,000 people give blood every year – why not talk with someone in your family or community who will help you overcome any concerns or fears you may have. Consider attending with a regular donor. The most common phrase we hear from new donors after giving blood? “I should have done it before!”

### **Contact Us**

If you have any questions, or concerns about giving blood please contact us at the contact details provided so that we have an opportunity to address your concern.

Website: [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)

Email: [contactus@ibts.ie](mailto:contactus@ibts.ie)

Tel: 1850 731 137

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/giveblood](http://www.facebook.com/giveblood)

Twitter: [@Giveblood\\_ie](https://twitter.com/Giveblood_ie)

Instagram: [Giveblood.ie](https://www.instagram.com/Giveblood.ie)

National Blood Centre, James' St, Dublin 8, D08 NH5R

# giveblood.ie

**We Count On You**