

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, telephone numbers and e-mail address. 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 / texts / e-mails to future blood donor clinics).

Information related to you and your blood donations is stored securely on the database. If you have given blood before and you are on our 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. Your complete honesty and accuracy in answering all the questions is essential for your own safety and for that of the patients who will receive your blood. All the information you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence.** New donors, or donors who have not given blood in the past 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 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 read / listened to and understood the Blood Safety Information and this information (the Blood Donation Information) and that to the best of your knowledge you are not at risk of any of the infections listed nor of transmitting these infections,
- that you understood the nature of the donation process and the risks involved in giving blood - see section entitled *Possible Complications of Giving Blood*,
- that you had an opportunity to ask questions and had satisfactory answers to any questions that you asked

and to give consent:

- to proceed with the donation process,
- for your blood to be tested for HIV, hepatitis and other infectious agents and for a small sample of your blood to be stored - see section entitled *Testing Blood Donations*,

- for your blood to be used for the benefit of patients, this may be by direct transfusion to a patient, or indirectly as described - see sections entitled Using Blood for Research and Development and Use of Plasma

and to agree:

- that if you develop any illness after donating, you will **immediately** phone one of the doctors at the National Blood Centre, Dublin on 01 4322800 or the Munster Regional Transfusion Centre, Cork on 021 4807400 as this illness may have consequences for the patients who will receive your blood.

It is not unusual that either temporarily or indefinitely 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 your permission to contact your General Practitioner (GP) for further details which will help us decide if you can give blood. You can read more about this in the Deferral Information section.

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 Dublin on 01 4322800, or Cork 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 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.

Haemoglobin Testing

Haemoglobin (Hb) is a protein that contains iron and is found in red blood cells. It carries oxygen around the body and gives blood its red colour. Hb levels vary from person to person and men usually have higher levels than women. Hb levels are often slightly lower in the summer months.

We test a small drop of blood from your finger to make sure that your Hb is at the level we require before you give blood and that you are not anaemic (i.e. that your Hb is not low). Red cells (containing Hb and iron) are removed when you give blood, causing a temporary drop in your Hb level. The minimum Hb levels needed before giving blood take this drop into consideration.

Giving blood too often can lead to low levels of iron in your body (iron deficiency). This can occur because every unit of blood contains between 200 and 250 mgs of iron. Iron deficiency does not always cause symptoms. In some people it may be associated with tiredness, impaired concentration or poor work performance. Continued loss of iron can cause anaemia.

If you do not pass the Hb test today we will advise you how long you should wait before trying to give blood again. We will also advise you if you should visit your GP. If you were not able to give blood in the past because your Hb level was not high enough, we may advise that you attempt to donate no more than once or twice a year.

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 insert a needle that is attached to a blood bag. A new sterile blood bag is used for every donor. **It is never reused.** Your blood will 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.

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 (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 or feel unwell during the donation, you must tell our clinic staff immediately. In the interests of your health the donation will be stopped.**

When the donation is completed, the needle will be carefully removed from your arm and a dressing applied. **We ask you to press firmly and directly on the needle site for at least 3 minutes after the needle is removed, keeping your arm straight. Please don't pick up your bags or put on your coat during this time. This is important in helping to prevent bruising.**

Resting

You will 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 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 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 outline some complications of giving blood here, so that if they occur, you will know what to do.

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, hand or fingers, when the needle is inserted, during the donation or after the needle is removed. We will stop the donation immediately and will care for you until you feel better. We ask that you do not leave the clinic until we advise that it is safe for you to do so.

Bruising

Bruising may develop due to seepage of blood from the vein into the tissues of the arm. It can look very dramatic but is usually harmless. Bruising may appear some way from the donation site (on the back of the arm or near the wrist), may not start until a day or two after the donation and may go through the colours of the rainbow. Most bruises are not painful and fade within 7 to 10 days. Sometimes bruising may take a few weeks to disappear completely. If a bruise develops during the donation the procedure will be stopped. On occasion the bruising may worsen and become painful. Very occasionally a bruise may become infected and you may need treatment with antibiotics.

To minimise the risk of bruising, we ask you to tell us if you have pain or discomfort when the needle is inserted, during the donation or after it is removed. You must also press firmly on the needle site for at least 3 minutes after the needle is removed keeping your arm straight. We ask all donors to limit the use of their donation arm for the first 15 minutes after giving blood and ideally to avoid using the arm for heavy work or exercise for the rest of the day.

If you do develop a bruise during or after donating we recommend that you avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise for at least a few days until the bruise is improving. For example, do not go to the gym or lift heavy shopping bags, as doing so could aggravate the bruising. However, normal gentle movements are very beneficial and should be continued. Cold compresses can be useful within the first 24 hours. Do not apply heat within the first 24 hours as this could make the bruising much worse.

If you experience any of the following after donating you should contact us in Dublin on 01 4322800 or Cork 021 4807400 or contact your GP:

- severe pain in your arm, hand or fingers,
- numbness or persistent 'pins and needles' or altered sensation in your arm, hand or fingers,
- swelling that is large or increasing in size,
- change in colour (pale or blue colour) of the hand or fingers,
- swelling of the hand or fingers,
- 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 until the next day. This is to prevent the donation site from becoming infected.

Fainting / Feeling faint, weak or light-headed

Some donors feel faint during or after giving blood. This may be due to anxiety, fatigue, dehydration or loss of blood volume. It is important that you relax and drink plenty of cold, non-alcoholic liquids before and after you donate. **If you feel faint, weak or light-headed during or after your donation please let one of our staff know immediately.**

Reducing the risk of fainting

Before giving blood we advise that you:

- get a good night's sleep,
- drink plenty of cold, non-alcoholic liquids in the 24 hours before donating - especially in warm weather,
- drink half a litre of water at the clinic in the 30 minutes just before donating - this will help to prevent fainting,
- eat savoury food and /or salty snacks the night before donation and at the clinic,
- eat something substantial in the 3 hours before you donate,
- tell us if you have low blood pressure or feel faint or dizzy when you stand up suddenly,
- let us know if you are very anxious so that we can help you feel at ease.

During giving blood we advise that you:

- wear loose, comfortable clothing,
- tense your leg and buttock muscles tightly for 5 seconds, then gradually release the hold over the next 10 seconds,
- or cross and uncross your legs.
- repeat these exercises whilst you are on the donation bed - during and immediately after your donation - as they will help reduce the risk of fainting,
- do not stand up too quickly - a member of staff will escort you to the refreshment area

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 liquids,
- avoid alcoholic drinks for at least 6 hours,
- do not have a hot bath or shower on the day you donate,
- do not use a sauna or steam room on the day you donate,
- avoid standing for long periods especially in poorly ventilated areas - such as standing in a long queue or on crowded public transport,
- avoid strenuous exercise until the next day - such as jogging, running, swimming or going to the gym,
- avoid any activity that may present a hazard to you or others if you were 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.

If you feel faint after leaving the clinic:

- you should sit or lie down straight away (on the ground if necessary) to avoid falling and injuring yourself,
- put your head between your knees for a few minutes,
- lie down if you need to, raise your feet and rest them on a chair if you can,
- stay sitting or lying for approximately 30 minutes or until you feel well again,
- whilst sitting or lying down tense your leg and buttock muscles tightly for 5 seconds, then gradually release the hold over the next 10 seconds.
- or cross and uncross your legs.
- repeat these exercises until you feel better - as they will help you recover from your faint,
- 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,
- do not drive for at least 6 hours after you have recovered because there is a risk that you may faint again whilst you are driving,
- if you feel faint whilst driving, slow down and stop the car as soon as it is safe to do so. Remain in the car and lay your seat as flat as possible. It is recommended that you do not get out of the car as fainting beside a road can be hazardous. Do not attempt to drive again. Call 999 for an ambulance.

If you lose consciousness (pass out) after donating please contact us on the above numbers for further advice as soon as possible. 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.

Uncommon risks of donating blood

Nerve Injury / Nerve irritation / Pain

Please tell us immediately if you have pain, discomfort or altered sensation in your arm, hand or fingers, when the needle is inserted, during the donation or after the needle is removed.

Very infrequently, insertion or removal of the needle may cause irritation or injury of a nerve in your arm. Pain, discomfort or altered sensation in your arm, hand or fingers may indicate that a nerve has been injured. These symptoms may also occur if a collection of blood under the skin (bruise) is pressing on a nerve. Tell us immediately if you have any of these symptoms and we will stop the donation and give you appropriate advice. If these symptoms 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. **Tell us immediately if you experience any pain or discomfort when the needle is inserted and we will stop the donation.**

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 / irregular pulse or tightness in the chest

Very rarely a donor may develop a faster than normal or irregular pulse or a sensation of tightness in the chest, during or after a donation. This is not necessarily caused by the donation. **If this happens while giving blood, tell us immediately.**

Serious Complications resulting in injury or hospitalisation

We collect around 150,000 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 have a problem after donating and need to seek urgent attention from a doctor or hospital, please let us know as soon as possible as we would like to hear the outcome. We are also required to record the incident and other less serious incidents and report them with your details to our insurance company.

If you become unwell after donating

If you become unwell or develop any illness after donating 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. This is because an illness may have consequences for the patients who will receive your blood. 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** e-mail us or leave a message on our Infoline as these are not manned 24/7 and the information you give us may mean 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 tests 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 Service if your tests confirm that you are positive for HIV, hepatitis B, 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 Positive Reactions on our Screening Tests

We have to carry out a range of screening tests on each donation. In a small percentage of donors, the donor's blood gives a false positive reaction on our tests. This means that although the screening test is reactive, additional testing shows that the result is not of any significance for the donor's health. You will be informed of such false reactions if they occur. While there are no health implications for the donor we are unable to use the blood for patients.

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 personal 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

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 their life saving gift.

Plasma from Irish donors has not been given to patients since 2001, because of a risk of transmitting vCJD. Some of it can be used in other ways that indirectly benefit patients, for example in ethically approved medical research, quality control or for teaching purposes.

The IBTS has agreed to supply waste plasma (currently disposed of at a cost) to the manufacturing sector for use in preparing healthcare related laboratory tests. IBTS and all blood services rely on commercial tests to ensure safe blood, and IBTS considers that this use of waste parts of donations is appropriate. From time to time other surplus material such as that left over after testing blood samples may also be supplied. The IBTS receives payment from this collaboration which helps to offset some IBTS costs and is therefore of benefit to the health service.

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 in 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. However, the IBTS is legally bound under the relevant European Union Directives that relate to blood donation, to maintain your records, including the health and lifestyle questionnaires that you completed when you donated, on file for a minimum of 30 years. If you want to access your records, contact Donor Services, Dublin on 01 4322800 or Cork on 021 4807400.

Further General 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.