

# GIVE BLOOD

SAVE LIVES BY BECOMING  
A BLOOD DONOR

DISCUSSION BOOKLET



## Introduction

Thanks for taking the time to help your students find out more about the importance of blood donation. This DVD and discussion guide should help students discover how they can save lives by becoming a blood donor, how to become a donor, and what the blood donation process involves.

This booklet contains 2 classroom discussion exercises to encourage class feedback. This is simply a guideline, so feel free to add your own topics and get them talking! The exercises also contain many answers to FAQs raised and are a great way to see what students have learned from the DVD.

*We hope you and your students enjoy exploring the topic of blood donation together.*

## Classroom Exercise 1

### *What prevents you from giving blood?*

#### **Methodology:**

White board exercise - Plenary method - **Approx. 10 minutes**

#### **Question:**

What do you think are the reasons why people (young people in particular) do not/cannot give blood?

#### **Teacher Action:**

Write the classes' answers on a white board and split the answers into 2 categories:

*Category 1* - The reasons why someone might be unwilling to give blood and see if and how people can address these, to enable them to give blood in the future

*Category 2* - The medical / lifestyle reasons why people might not be able to give blood

By the end of this exercise, ensure the Category 1 reasons detailed below have been discussed and explored as this category reflects personal reasons for not giving blood that may be overcome by the potential donor.

For any Category 2 answers, just comment very briefly on the medical eligibility as detailed below.



## Category 1:

### *Potential reasons why someone may be unwilling to give blood*



#### ***Reason 1: I am afraid of needles***

**Response:** This is perfectly understandable and many people have this fear. However, the **Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS)** collects 130,000 donations a year so our staff are highly trained to ensure the donation is collected with minimum discomfort and the donor is given the proper care, attention and reassurance they need.

Many donors report that they get over their fear very quickly and realise afterwards it was only a small part of the process – and nothing compared to the positive feeling they get when they give blood (many donors return to us regularly!).

Consider attending a clinic with a regular donor/friend and give blood together – as it's good to have company when you go to donate.



#### ***Reason 2: I am afraid of fainting***

**Response:** There are lots of precautions that you can take to prevent fainting during or after donating. The most important is to eat a substantial meal in the 3 hours beforehand, and to drink plenty of cold, non-alcoholic drinks in the 24 hours before donation. Savoury or salty food and snacks are particularly effective which is why we provide crisps and minerals for donors on all our clinics! You will be given further post-donation advice at clinic.



#### ***Reason 3: I don't know how to go about it - fear of the unexpected***

**Response:** Hopefully this class, and the DVD has helped give more information on this issue but you can find out more on **[www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)** In addition you can call the **1800 731 137** donor line for more information. Consider attending a clinic with a regular experienced donor or friend.



**Reason 4:** *I am too young*

**Response:** You can start giving blood from 18 onwards – before that you can help promote blood donation among your family and community.



**Reason 4:** *I don't know my blood group*

**Response:** Not a problem – when we take your blood, we run a blood grouping test in our labs and determine your blood group. After that we keep a record of your grouping (it doesn't change) and it will also be on the donor card we send to you after your first donation.

**Category 2:**

*The medical / lifestyle reasons why people might not be able to give blood*



**Reason 1:** *Donor has had a piercing / tattoo*

**Response:** **FALSE** - Donor can give after 4 months.



**Reason 2:** *Donors who smoke cannot give blood*

**Response:** **FALSE** - A common myth, but completely incorrect. Smoking has nothing to do with blood donation.



**Reason 3:** *Donors who had jaundice cannot give blood*

**Response:** **FALSE** - If you had childhood jaundice (before you were 13) or you had jaundice at any age that was caused by gallstones or gallbladder you are able to give blood.



**Reason 4:** Donors who lived in the UK cannot give blood

**Response: FALSE** - The permanent deferral regarding vCJD associated with UK residency and certain surgical procedures has been removed.

This means that from 7th October 2019 donors who have been deferred by the IBTS for this reason or people who have not attended a clinic for this reason may now be eligible to give blood provided that they meet our other medical guidelines.



**Reason 5:** Donor might not meet the minimum weight to give blood

**Response: TRUE** – All donors must be above **50kgs** (7 stone 12 lbs) to be eligible to donate. In addition, female donors under 26 years of age who are less than 5' 6" (168cm) in height **AND** less than 10st 3lb (65kg) in weight, will have their height and weight taken into consideration at clinic in order to estimate their total blood volume. The reason for this is to decrease the risk of fainting for donors with low blood volume.



**Reason 6:** Donor might have traveled to an area that affects their ability to give blood.

**Response: TRUE** – Travel outside of Ireland carries a risk of transmitting an illness such as Malaria, Zika Virus, and West Nile Virus (among others) to sick patients. Therefore, depending on where the donor has traveled, they may need to wait between 28 days and 12 months before giving blood.



**Reason 7:** Donor is gay.

**Response: FALSE** – a donor's eligibility is not based on his or her sexuality. Gay women can donate but men who have sex with men must wait for 12 months after their most recent sexual contact before donating.



**Reason 8:** Donor had a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**Response:** Donors who have had *Chlamydia*, *Genital Herpes*, *Genital or Anal warts*, *Trichomoniasis*, *Chancroid* or *non-specific Urethritis* must be fully recovered for **5 years** before they can donate blood.

Donors who have had *Syphilis* or *Gonorrhea* cannot donate blood.



**Reason 9:** Donor drinks alcohol.

**Response:** Donors cannot give valid consent while under the influence of alcohol. In addition, alcohol consumption leads to dehydration so donating after drinking alcohol greatly increases the risk of fainting. Therefore, it is advisable not to donate on the same day as you have consumed alcohol.



**Reason 10:** Donor takes recreational drugs?

**Response:** Donors cannot give valid consent while under the influence of non-prescription drugs. However, the length of time between taking drugs and donating varies according to the drug taken and the method of use. People who inject drugs cannot donate. You must wait for 12 months after snorting a drug before donating. Generally you need to wait 2-4 weeks after taking drugs orally – this depends on the drug. You can donate the day after smoking cannabis.

**There are additional reasons why people may be unable to give blood, details of which are available on: [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)**

## Classroom Exercise 2

*What can you do to spread the word about the need for blood donors?*

### Methodology:

White board exercise- Plenary method - **Approx. 10 minutes**

### Discussion:

Discuss the points below and see what kind of answers you receive. Use the suggested answers below as guides to promote further conversation

*What would encourage you to give blood, how can you encourage others to give blood?*

- Have a discussion about factors that might encourage younger people to give blood – may include awareness, education, clinic information, convenience etc.
- Consider a fun activity locally that promotes awareness of a clinic in your area – e.g. fun run
- Consider making a video recording/project about donors and recipients in your area – ask your families about their experiences. Remember 1 in 4 people will likely receive blood in their lifetime, so this means you probably know someone who has received blood
- Visit a clinic - Next time there is a clinic in your area, and you are aged 13 or over, maybe you can attend with a donor to see what is involved

### Other potential topics for further discussion:

- Does anyone plan on becoming a blood donor in the future? If yes, what made you decide to give blood?
- Have you ever been to a blood donation clinic? If yes, what did you think of the experience?
- Do any of you know someone who gives blood?
- Do you know anyone who has received a blood transfusion?

## When you are over 18... Give blood!

Prior to doing so, check on the website [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie), whether you can and, where and when your next clinic is on. Also, read about what you should do prior to attending a clinic – hydration and being well fed are extremely important. Think about bringing a friend – it helps you with any concerns you may have, and also introduces them to the idea of blood donation.

Consider encouraging others to give blood also (*but remember not everybody can, so it is important to respect people's personal decisions*).

Remember there is more information (*including clinic locations, dates and times*) available on [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)

# giveblood.ie

**Irish Blood Transfusion Service**  
**National Blood Centre**  
James' Street  
Dublin 8

MKT180222

**Call:** 1800 731 137  
**Visit:** [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)

 [facebook.com/giveblood](https://facebook.com/giveblood)

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