Possible consequences of giving blood are:
- bruising – in 2018, 1 in 250 donors reported bruising after donation. Most of these bruises are small.
- fainting – in 2018, 1 in 63 donors reported feeling faint, or fainting, after donation.
- inflammation of the arm, irritation of a nerve or puncture of an artery – these are rare complications of donation in less than 1 in 2,600 donors.

We record when things go wrong with blood donation. We do this to improve our procedures and to make sure our donors are as safe as possible. We always investigate severe, unintended and unexpected complications of donation.

We follow the Duty of Candour regulations and share our findings with anyone who has been affected.

Let us know if:
- you are unwell in the two weeks after donating (apart from simple coughs, colds or flu). It may mean that we cannot use your blood for patients. Please phone our Donor Care Line as soon as possible, on 0345 90 90 999.
- you develop any side effects from donation, or if you are concerned about a possible complication of donation. You should also tell us if you have a red or itchy reaction to the cleaning preparation we use on your arm.
- you cannot give blood at the moment. Call us, or contact us through our website, to tell us how long you will not be donating for and the reason why. This helps us keep our records up to date.

The patients who receive your blood cannot thank you personally. So on their behalf, thank you!
You must never donate for at least three months after:

- receiving money or drugs for sex
- sex with a partner who is, or you think may be:
  - HIV or HTLV positive
  - a Hepatitis B carrier
  - a Hepatitis C carrier
- (men only) oral or anal sex with another man, even if you used a condom or other protection
- (women only) sex with a man who has ever had oral or anal sex with another man, even if they used a condom or other protection.
There are exceptions, so please ask.

You must not donate if:

- you think you need a test for HIV/AIDS, or have taken PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)/Truvada® or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection.
- you have ever injected, or been injected with, drugs; even a long time ago or only once. This includes body-building drugs and injectable tanning agents. You may be able to give if a doctor prescribed the drugs to your partner. Please ask.
- you have ever had sex or been injected with drugs, even a long time ago or only once. This includes body-building drugs and tanning injections. You may be able to give if a doctor prescribed the drugs to your partner. Please ask.
- you have been sexually active in parts of the world where HIV/AIDS is very common. This includes most countries in Africa. There are exceptions, so please ask.
- you have taken PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)/Truvada® or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection.
Different rules may apply depending on the reason you took this so please ask.

The donation process

Registration

When you first volunteer to give blood, we will register your details (name, address, gender and date of birth) on our database. If you would like more information before registering, please ask.

Health screening

Each time you donate we ask you to fill in a questionnaire. This covers your medical and travel history and your eligibility as a donor.

Donor consent

Before you donate we will also ask you to read and sign the donor declaration. This is a legal requirement for us, and also reassures us that you understand what is involved in giving blood.

If you decide that you do not wish to donate, you can leave at any time with no questions asked.

Haemoglobin testing

Before you donate, we need to take a sample of blood from your finger to test your haemoglobin levels. If the result from this is too low, we can do a more accurate test on a blood sample taken from your arm. This will show us if your haemoglobin level is high enough to donate. If it is lower than we would like, we will give you advice about what to do next.

Donation

A member of our staff will be with you throughout your donation.

We will ask you to lie down on a donation bed or chair and then place a pressure cuff around your upper arm. We clean your skin with an antiseptic preparation (containing chlorhexidine and isopropyl alcohol) before we insert a needle attached to a blood bag. Samples for testing are collected along with your donation.

If a donation gives a positive result for one of our routine tests, our clinical team will contact you and advise you what to do next. If we can’t get in contact directly, we may ask your GP or other local services to follow up your tests as appropriate.

A donation can occasionally show a false reaction in one of our tests, which stops that donation being used for patients. If this happens we let the donor know, even though there is no risk to their own health. For patients and our staff, knowledge is important for effective care.

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