Extra tests are carried out on some donations because of information provided by the donor, or to meet the special needs of some patients. These tests include malaria testing, more detailed blood grouping and sickle testing, looking for inherited sickle haemoglobin (sickle cell). More information about testing can be found in our leaflet ‘Testing for bloodborne infections’.

How your donation is used

The blood you donate is split into a number of components, so that patients only receive the parts of blood they need. As a result, your donation could be used for more than one patient.

Blood components include:

- red cells which contain haemoglobin and give blood its colour. Their job is to carry oxygen around the body. They provide a vital lifeline to patients who are bleeding or are short of blood (anaemic) for other reasons.
- platelets which work to stop bleeding and bruising. They are needed by patients who do not have enough platelets because of chemotherapy, leukaemia and other diseases or heavy bleeding.
- plasma which helps blood clot to treat or prevent bleeding.

Almost all donations are used for patients, but in some circumstances donations are used by the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS) or other organisations (both commercial and non-commercial) for other purposes. This includes education and training, research, reagent production, and quality control.

SNBTS may recover part of the costs of collecting, processing and testing donations from the organisations that we supply with surplus products. We make sure that any project we supply supports healthcare and any costs recovered are returned to SNBTS for the benefit of patients in Scotland. SNBTS does not make any profit from a donor’s gift.

Your information

We keep a record of all donors, donations and test results. We use this information to:

- keep donors and patients safe.
- let you know when and where to donate.
- get in touch about any problems.
- check we’re meeting our standards.
- help recruit new donors.

We keep information about donors and donations for at least 30 years. Personal information is kept secure and only shared with other organisations if needed to deliver our service. All our staff are trained in confidentiality.

Possible complications of giving blood

For most people, donation is a simple and trouble-free experience, but the following can occur:

- bruising and pain - bruising occurs in around 1 in 250 donors, most of these bruises are small.
- fainting – around 1 in 63 donors report feeling faint or fainting after donation.

Other rare complications of donation affect less than 1 in 2,600 donations. These include inflammation of the arm, irritation of a nerve or puncture of an artery. Please speak to staff if you would like more information about these complications, or look at our website.

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!
Thank you for offering to give blood. Please help us to keep blood transfusion safe by reading this leaflet before you donate.

Introduction

Thank you for offering to give blood. Please help us to keep blood transfusion safe by reading this leaflet before you donate.

Blood safety

All donations are tested for Hepatitis B, C and HIV, and Syphilis. All donors will be tested at least once for HTLV (human T-cell lymphotropic virus).

Testing alone is not enough to make sure blood is safe to use. Our questionnaire is designed to select the safest possible blood for patients. You must never give blood just to get a test.

You must not donate if:

• you think you need a test for HIV/AIDS, HTLV or Hepatitis.

You must never donate if:

• you are a Hepatitis B carrier
• you are a Hepatitis C carrier
• you are a Hepatitis C carrier
• you are a Hepatitis B carrier
• you are a Hepatitis C carrier
• you are an HIV positive or receiving money or drugs for sex
• you have taken PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)/Truvada® or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis).
• you have had an injection.
• you have had an injection.
• you have had an injection.
• you have had an injection.
• you have been 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. 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.

Our staff will go through your questionnaire with you. They will decide if you are able to donate and will also answer any questions you have about blood donation.

There are more than 200 rules guiding the selection of donors, which means some people will not be eligible to give blood for various lengths of time. If you are not able to give blood, we will tell you why.

Donor consent

Before you donate we will 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 test a small drop 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.

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

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 occasionally can cause 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.

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 the blood.

After donation

We let you rest until you are fully recovered. This is a legal requirement for us, and also reassures us that you understand what is involved in giving blood.

For your own safety, we advise that you avoid strenuous or hazardous activities for the rest of the day after giving a donation.

Testing blood donations

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Getting ready

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

When your donation is finished, we remove the needle carefully and apply a dressing. We ask you to press on this for a few minutes to make sure that any bleeding has stopped completely.

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When your donation is finished, we remove the needle carefully and apply a dressing. We ask you to press on this for a few minutes to make sure that any bleeding has stopped completely.

Resting

We let you rest until you are fully recovered and then take you to the refreshment area, where drinks and snacks are available.

For your own safety, we advise that you avoid strenuous or hazardous activities for the rest of the day after giving a donation.

Other information

Testing blood donations

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