

Serious complications associated with blood donation

Very rarely, more serious complications may occur and require medical treatment and/or some restriction in your normal activities. Less than one such problem is reported to NZBS each year against a background of almost 200,000 donations of blood and plasma.

Serious complications include;

- Damage to an artery, nerve or tendon at the time that the needle is inserted.
- Soft tissue swelling due to bleeding or infection.
- Cardiac complications for donors with pre-existing heart disease.
- 'Delayed faint' – If a donor feels faint after leaving the donor centre, and falls to the ground serious injuries may occur. The risk will be greatly reduced if you rest for several minutes after the donation and keep well hydrated, both before and after giving a donation. If you feel faint after leaving the Donor Centre follow the steps described on the previous page for feeling faint.

Many donors can safely give blood up to four times a year

Giving blood too often can lead to low levels of iron in your body as every unit of blood donated contains between 200-250mg of iron. You can give blood up to four times a year. For some donors a lesser number may be suitable.

For most people a good diet is the best way to maintain their iron levels. For more information on iron and health, please read the Iron brochure.

Collection and protection of your information

During the process of blood donation we will request the following information from you:

- Your name, address and contact details so we can invite you to donate again.
- Your date of birth. This enables us to uniquely identify you.
- Your ethnicity. This may be provided to the Ministry of Health for statistical purposes.
- Relevant medical, travel and behavioural history to enable us to assess your eligibility to donate blood.

Some of the information requested may affect our ability to accept you as a donor. Please discuss with staff if you have any concerns.

Under the Health Information Privacy Code 1994 you have the right to request access to and correction of any information held about you.

Your health information will not be released to any outside agencies unless specifically authorised or required by law.

Other uses

When blood cannot be used for transfusion (it may have expired for instance), it may be used for other purposes: these include teaching students how to perform blood grouping; quality control to ensure blood products are safe and effective and to enable NZBS to improve the range of products we provide to patients; in the manufacture of reagents used to help with the diagnosis and management of a number of diseases.

In addition blood will occasionally be provided for use in research activities. This only occurs when the research project is approved by an appropriate Ethics Committee. No personal information will be released without specific consent from the donor.

Our commitment to New Zealand

The New Zealand Blood Service is committed to providing sufficient blood products for use in New Zealand from donations given by volunteer donors. The need for products made from plasma varies. Most processed plasma products are made sequentially in a process that starts with pooled plasma donations. Not all plasma products made are needed in New Zealand in the amounts available. Any excess may be sold overseas.

Blood components that cannot be used clinically may be made available to commercial companies for use in the manufacture of laboratory reagents. This is closely monitored by New Zealand Blood Service using an ethical framework developed by a specialised Ethics Committee.

The revenue from these sales is used to improve the availability of other blood products across New Zealand. Information on revenue obtained by these processes is provided in the New Zealand Blood Service Annual Report.

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All about Donating Blood



SAVE LIVES
GIVE BLOOD

Thanks for going out of your way to save lives.

This brochure tells you everything you need to know about giving blood. It's important you read it so you are fully informed before deciding to become a blood donor.

Before you give blood

- Have you had something to eat and drink in the last three hours? If not, have something to eat and drink in the Donor Rooms before donating.
- Do you have a naturally low blood pressure? Do you feel faint if you stand up suddenly? If so, please tell us.
- Are you very anxious? Please let us know and we can help you feel at ease, or you can come back later.
- Are you allergic to antiseptic or sticking plaster? Please tell us and we can make other arrangements.

What will happen when you give blood?

1) Registration

You will be asked to fill out a health questionnaire called a Donor Session Record form. You will be asked to complete this in full including your personal information, address and contact details.

2) Health check

In a private interview booth, we will:

- Check if you have any health issues that could affect the person receiving your blood.
- Check that giving blood will not affect your own health.
- Go over the health questionnaire with you to check:
 - You are over 16 years of age.
 - That your information is all correctly recorded.
 - That you agree to your blood being tested.

You will also be asked to confirm that you understand your blood donation may be transfused into other people or used for other purposes.

3) Haemoglobin check

Haemoglobin is the red coloured protein in your blood that carries oxygen. Your haemoglobin level will be checked using a quick finger prick test. The test result must meet our requirements or we will not be able to accept your donation.

4) Making the donation

We will then settle you onto a donation bed and check your details again. We must accurately identify you and your donation at this stage so that we can link these to your blood test results.

A pressure cuff will be put around your upper arm to help locate a vein and a skin antiseptic will be applied before a sterile needle is inserted. The needle will feel like a pinch or mild sting.

After this, the donation process is normally pain-free and usually takes about 5-10 minutes. During the collection process the blood flow is regulated by opening and closing your hand on a rubber 'squeezer'. If you do feel any pain or discomfort please tell us immediately.

A new needle and collection bag is used to collect each blood donation. Needles and bags are never reused.

After donating around 500mL of blood, the pressure cuff is deflated and the needle removed. The nurse will ask you to press on your vein with a temporary pressure pad and then a protective pad similar to a sticking plaster will be applied.

5) Now you can relax

After you have rested on the bed for a further 5 minutes, make your way to our donor lounge. Drinking liquids helps replace the blood you've just given, so please choose a drink from the available refreshments and have something to eat.

You must wait another 10-15 minutes before leaving so that your body can adjust from giving a blood donation.

6) Now you're free to go

A card with your donation code on it will be given to you after the donation is collected. It has instructions to follow if you become unwell in the next 48 hours with any infection, diarrhoea or other illness, or if you remember medication or personal circumstances not mentioned at the interview. If any of these occur or you think of any reason why your blood should not be used for a transfusion, there is a number on the card for you to call.

If you have any concerns while giving blood please let one of our staff know. If you need advice or have any problems after donating, please ring us on 0800 GIVEBLOOD (0800 448 325).

Occasional problems with giving blood

Blood donation is a very safe procedure. We use the best techniques available to keep problems to an absolute minimum. However, sometimes a situation may arise during or after giving blood.

Minor bruising

A small bruise can sometimes appear after giving blood. It will disappear over a few days.

To minimise the chance of bruising, limit the use of the arm from which blood was collected for the first 15 minutes after giving blood. Ideally you should avoid using that arm for heavy work or recreational activities for a period of 12 hours.

If you develop a bruise that causes pain or discomfort, paracetamol or applying an icepack may help. If not, please call us for advice.

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 the collection staff.

You can avoid bleeding by limiting the use of your elbow for about 15 minutes. Be careful when eating or drinking, and when putting on a coat.

Feeling faint or light headed

If you feel dizzy or unwell on the donation bed, please tell the nurse immediately.

If you feel faint afterwards, sit down (on the ground if necessary). Put your head between your knees for a few minutes and lie down if you need to. Stay sitting for at least 30 minutes or until you feel well again.

Drinking fluids can help you feel better too.

Do not smoke for at least an hour after giving blood as smoking increases the chance of feeling dizzy or faint.

Pain

On rare occasions a donation needle may come into contact with a nerve or tendon under the skin and cause a sharp pain. If this happens, please tell us immediately.

Fast pulse or tightness in the chest

Very rarely an older donor may develop a faster than normal pulse or a sensation of tightness in the chest. If this happens while giving blood, tell us immediately.

If you develop an important problem after leaving the Donor Centre then you should contact a doctor or hospital so that it can be assessed. Please also let us know as soon as you can as we are always keen to know when problems occur. The details may help us improve our systems and reduce the likelihood of the problem affecting other donors.