

What I need to know about blood donation



Who are the safest donors?

Voluntary, non-remunerated (unpaid) donors who give blood regularly are the safest blood donors. The World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that people who give blood freely and without expecting financial reward have little reason to conceal information about their lifestyle that may make them unsuitable to give blood, either temporarily or permanently.

Their primary motivation is to help other people and not to obtain any personal benefit. They are satisfied to know they have saved a life. The blood recipient's life depends on the donor's honesty.

Blood can be used in the following areas:

Medical cases: e.g. cancer treatment	27%
Childbirth & gynaecological cases	26%
Surgical cases: e.g. cardiac surgery	21%
Paediatric cases: e.g. leukaemia	10%
Orthopaedic cases: e.g. hip replacements	6%
Research/laboratory	6%
Casualty: e.g. trauma patients	4%

A person can donate if they:

- Weigh at least 50kg or more;
- Are between the ages of 16 and 65;
- Are in good health;
- Lead a sexually safe lifestyle;
- Consider their blood safe for transfusion; and
- Commit to donate blood regularly.

Do not give blood if:

- You have had more than one sexual partner in the past six months.
- You have had sexual contact with someone whose sexual background is unknown to you.
- You have or may have contracted a sexually transmissible disease (STD) such as HIV or Syphilis that can be passed on to a patient through blood transfusion.
- You have ever injected yourself with drugs.
- You are giving blood in order to get an HIV/AIDS test.

Window period: What is it?

- It is the time from when a person is infected with HIV or other viruses until the time when the virus can be seen or detected in blood tests.
- The danger is that although a person tests "negative" during this period, the virus is still in the blood and can be passed on to a patient through blood transfusion.
- A person can be infected with HIV without knowing it through unsafe sex and other high-risk behaviours. This is why we ask people who have been involved in high-risk behaviour not to donate blood.

Where does blood go?

Blood consists of red cells, white cells and platelets suspended in a clear, straw-coloured fluid called plasma. Plasma contains vital soluble substances essential for good health. These include clotting proteins, sugars and antibodies.

By separating whole blood into its components and using only the particular component needed, it is possible to use a single donation for the treatment of several patients.

Which blood groups are compatible?

		DONOR								
		Type	O Neg	O Pos	B Neg	B Pos	A Neg	A Pos	AB Neg	AB Pos
P A T I E N T	AB Pos	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	AB Neg	•		•			•		•	
	A Pos	•	•				•	•		
	A Neg	•					•			
	B Pos	•	•	•	•					
	B Neg	•		•						
	O Pos	•	•							
	O Neg	•								

Main blood groups:

Chemical substances found on red blood cells determine blood groups. The two most important blood group systems are the ABO system and the Rhesus (Rh) system. Within the ABO system, people can be four types: O, A, B or AB. Within the Rh system, people can either be Rh positive or Rh negative. Each system is inherited independently of the other, therefore, there are eight main groups.

Group O blood is known as the universal blood type as it can be given to patients of any blood group. It is, therefore, the most valued blood type.

