NHS
National Services Scotland



Giving blood: Process, risks and information

Donor information leaflet

SCOTTISH NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE®

GIVE BLOOD

Thank you for offering to give blood. Blood donors are very precious to patients in Scotland.

This booklet should help give you the information you need to make the right decision for you. It also signposts you to more information. Please read this booklet carefully before giving your consent to donate blood.

If you have any questions (or difficulties reading or understanding this leaflet), contact us on **0345 90 90 999**. You can also find out more at www.scotblood.co.uk

What happens when I come to donate?

Registration

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



Health screening

Each time you give blood 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, including asking about your recent sexual activity. This allows us to assess your risk of infection and work out if you are eligible to give blood. We 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.

Find out more about your eligibility to give blood at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/can-i-give-blood

Haemoglobin testing

Before you donate, we need to take 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 second 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 is safe for donation, we will give you advice about what to do next.

- Find out more about low and high haemoglobin levels by asking for a leaflet next time you give blood.
- You can see the low haemoglobin leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/low-haemoglobin-and-blood-donation
- You can see the high haemoglobin leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/high-haemoglobin-and-blood-donation

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.

It usually takes five to ten minutes to take a full donation of just under one pint. However, if there are any problems, we may stop your donation early. Please let our staff know straight away if your arm is uncomfortable once your donation has started, as it is important we don't continue with a painful donation.

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.

Find out more online at
www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/what-happens-when-i-give-blood

Resting

We will bring you a drink to have on the bed when you are finished. We will also ask you to take and eat a snack as you leave, to help prevent you feeling ill after donation. For your own safety, we advise you to avoid strenuous or hazardous activities for the rest of the day after giving a donation.

Possible risks of giving blood

For most people, giving blood is a trouble-free experience. However, there are some potential risks. It is important you know about these before deciding to give blood. This is called 'informed consent.' The following section is designed to give you all the information you need to make the right decision for you, including what to do to minimise risk, and what to do if you develop a side effect after giving blood. Please talk to us if you have any questions about this.



Reducing the risks

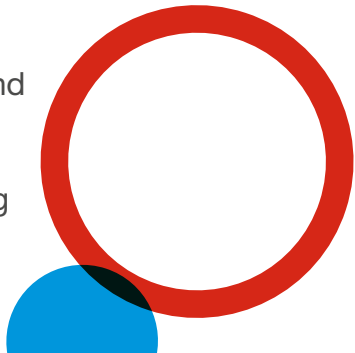
- Eat and drink before you give blood
- Drink 500ml water at session
- Do muscle tensing exercises while you donate
- Let us know if your arm is sore or you feel unwell in any way
- Apply pressure to your arm immediately after donation
- Avoid strenuous activity the day after you give blood
- **Phone us if you feel at all unwell afterwards**

Possible side effects of giving blood

Feeling faint

Sometimes you may feel faint (or actually faint) while donating, which is why we make sure you have time to rest. Occasionally, people can injure themselves if they faint. It is important that you eat normally before you give your donation and drink plenty of water. We encourage you to drink 500ml of water when you arrive on session, and do muscle tensing exercises while you donate.

After donation, drink plenty more water, and avoid heat, packed spaces, strenuous exercise and anything else you think might make you feel faint.



Find out more about how you can reduce your chances of fainting by reading our **'Fainting: Advice for donors' leaflet before you give blood.** www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/fainting-advice-for-donors

Bruising, and complications relating to needle insertion

Minor bruising to the arm after blood donation is quite common, usually harmless and fades within a few days. To help stop bruising, press the puncture site firmly as soon as after the needle is removed until bleeding stops; and avoid heavy lifting or manual work for at least twelve hours. If bruising, pain or discomfort becomes severe, please get in touch.

- Find out more about how you can reduce your chances of bruising by reading our **'Bruising: Advice for donors' leaflet** before you give blood.
- If you develop a bruise after the session, you can also see this leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/bruising-advice-for-donors

However, sometimes inserting the needle may cause more significant arm problems post donation. These complications are very rare, but could include: temporary or permanent nerve injury; tendon injury; arterial puncture; inflammation of the arm; or scarring.

If your arm continues to feel sore after the initial insertion of the needle please let a member of staff know. Our expert staff are trained to keep you safe, and to give immediate treatment if needed.

Low iron levels

We check your haemoglobin levels every time you come to a session before you can give blood.

Each blood donation contains approximately 240mg of iron and it can take approximately 4-6 months to replace this by eating a diet rich in iron.

Young donors, pre-menopausal female donors, donors who give blood very regularly and donors whose diets have a low iron content are at greater risk of developing iron deficiency as a result of blood donation.

Men should give blood no more than four times in any twelve month period, and women no more than three in any twelve month period.

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- You can see the low haemoglobin leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/low-haemoglobin-and-blood-donation
- You can see the high haemoglobin leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/high-haemoglobin-and-blood-donation



Allergic reactions

Some donors may experience an allergic reaction to the dressing we use, or the chlorhexidine used to sterilise your arm. Most allergic reactions are mild. Symptoms can include: sneezing; a runny or blocked nose; red, itchy, watery eyes; wheezing and coughing; tingling and swelling of lips and tongue; a red, itchy rash; or worsening of asthma or eczema symptoms. Very occasionally a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock can occur.

If you notice these or any other side effects not stated in this leaflet, please let a member of staff know immediately.

Extremely rare complications

Although extremely uncommon, more serious problems can occur. If you have any questions about this, please ask.

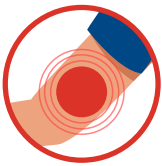
- If something doesn't feel right while you're donating or after a session, for whatever reason, let us know
- If you suffer any unexpected symptoms after giving blood, get in touch



Fairly Common
(1 in 10 - 1 in 100)
- Bruising
- Feeling faint



Uncommon
(1 in 100 - 1 in 1,000)
- Fainting
- Re-bleeding



Rare
(1 in 1,000 - 1 in 10,000)
- Arm pain
- Arterial puncture
- Nerve injury / irritation



Very rare
(1 in 10,000 - 1 in 100,000)
- Allergic reaction
- Superficial thrombophlebitis
- Tendon injury



Extremely rare
(1 in 1,000,000)
- Anaphylaxis
- Arteriovenous (AV) fistula
- Brachial artery
- pseudoaneurysm
- Cellulitis
- Compartment syndrome
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

Major cardiovascular event, including:
- Cardiac arrest
- Myocardial infarction
- Other acute cardiac symptoms
- Cerebrovascular accident
- Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)

Based on 2021 SNBTS data

Diabetic donors

HbA1c is a measure of your average blood glucose (sugar) levels over the past two to three months. If you have diabetes, your HbA1c level is likely to be tested on a regular basis by your doctor or nurse. Blood donation will lower your HbA1c levels, so diabetic donors should inform their diabetic team that they are blood donors. Blood donation should preferably be performed after HbA1c testing.

Let us know

Please let us know if you become ill within two weeks of your donation or if you believe your blood should not be transfused to a patient.

Call us for advice on **0345 90 90 999**, or seek medical help through your GP or NHS 24 (by phoning 111). **In an emergency, dial 999 or go to Accident and Emergency (A&E) at your local hospital.**

Please let us know if you are unwell in the two weeks after donating (apart from a simple cold). **It may mean that we can't use your blood for patients.**

If you suffer any sort of side effect after blood donation, please get in touch.

- Call us on **0345 90 90 999** - our medical team is available 24hrs a day
- If you need immediate help contact your GP, or NHS 24 on 111
- **In an emergency call 999 or go to your local A&E**

Blood safety

‘Sex’ is defined as vaginal, anal or oral sex

You must not donate if:

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

You must never donate if:

- you are HIV positive or receiving treatment for HIV
- you are HTLV positive
- you are a Hepatitis B carrier
- you are a Hepatitis C carrier
- you have ever had Syphilis (even if you have been treated for it)
- you have ever injected, or been injected with, drugs; even a long time ago or only once. This applies to any illicit injected drugs, including body-building drugs, chemsex drugs and tanning agents.

You must not donate for at least three months after:

- receiving money or drugs for sex
- taking part in chemsex (chemsex is a specific type of sexual activity where people take certain stimulant drugs to let them have sex for longer and with more people. Drugs associated with chemsex include methamphetamine, mephedrone and GHB)
- being diagnosed with or treated for (or having sex with someone who has been diagnosed with or is being treated for) a sexually transmitted disease (excluding chlamydia, genital herpes or genital warts)

- taking PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophlyaxis) /Truvada® or PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) to prevent HIV infection
- having sex with a partner who is, or you think may be:
  - HIV or HTLV positive
  - a Hepatitis B carrier
  - a Hepatitis C carrier
- having sex with a partner who:
  - has ever received money or drugs for sex
  - has ever injected, or been injected with, drugs; even a long time ago or only once. This applies to any illicit injected drug, including bodybuilding drugs, chemsex drugs and tanning agents.

You will also be asked whether over the last three months you have:

- had sex with someone new, or resumed a previous or infrequent sexual relationship
- had sex with more than one person

If you answer 'yes' to either (or both) questions, you will then be asked if you had anal sex with any of your sexual partners

- If you have, you will not be able to donate for up to three months
- If you have not had anal sex, you will be able to donate (subject to all other eligibility criteria)

Find out more about your eligibility to give blood (including our quick quiz) at **www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/can-i-give-blood**

Testing blood donations

All donations are tested for infection with Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B (past and present), Hepatitis C, Hepatitis E, HIV, HTLV, Syphilis, and high levels of Human Parvovirus B19 (Slapped Cheek syndrome). Some donations are tested for West Nile virus. For some travel related illness like malaria or Chagas disease we will only take a small sample of your blood to test (rather than a donation). We will contact you with your results and guidance on your eligibility to donate. On rare occasions, testing for new infections may be introduced rapidly for specific reasons e.g. blood safety. Some donations are also tested for sickle haemoglobin (Sickle Cell). This test may also pick up elevated HbA1c levels, which may be linked to diabetes.

If a donation gives a positive result for one of our 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.

What is HTLV?

HTLV is very rare in the UK. It is mainly found among people who originated from parts of the world where it is more common. Most people with HTLV have no symptoms and are unaware of the infection.

A small number may develop a rare blood cancer or nerve problems. HTLV is most commonly passed from mother to baby. It can also be transmitted sexually or by blood transfusion. In the UK the likelihood of picking up HTLV from a sexual partner is very low, unless they are already known to have HTLV.

- Find out more about testing by asking for our **'Testing for blood-borne infections' leaflet** next time you give blood.
- You can also see this leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/testing-for-blood-borne-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
- platelets
- plasma

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, medicine or 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.

Find out more about how blood donations are used at www.scotblood.co.uk/about-blood/blood-components

Equality and Diversity

We aim to meet the needs of the public and stakeholders who represent the diverse communities of Scotland. Equality and diversity is about the recognition of difference in its widest sense.

We ask about your ethnicity to help match blood profiles to patients more effectively. This can help improve how quickly and efficiently patients from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (who may have rarer blood types) can be treated.

We can make our publications available in large print, braille (English only), audio tape and different languages. However, blood donation sessions, because of the technical language used and confidentiality needed are conducted in spoken English unless otherwise specified.

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
- improve our service
- 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. Our databases are not connected to any NHS systems outside SNBTS. All our staff are trained in confidentiality.

- Find out more about our confidentiality policies and your rights by asking for our 'Data Protection Notice' leaflet next time you give blood.
- You can also see this leaflet online at www.scotblood.co.uk/giving-blood/publications/data-protection-notice



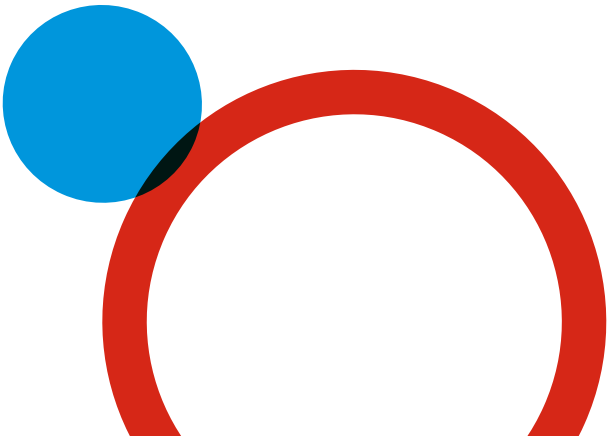
Duty of Candour

As part of the NHS, we follow Scottish Government Duty of Candour regulations (2018). This is a legal duty on health, care and social services organisations to be open and honest with patients when something goes wrong with their treatment or care. It applies to everyone who works in healthcare.

Donor consent

Like any clinical procedure, there are some risks to giving blood. There are also certain reasons why some people should not donate. It is important you understand these before you make a decision. This is called ‘informed consent’.

When you come to give blood, you will be asked to sign the Donor Declaration to confirm you agree with the seven statements below. This is a legal requirement for us, and means you understand what is involved in giving blood. If you decide you do not want to donate, you can leave at any time. You don’t have to explain why.



The Donor Declaration

1. I have read and understood the Donor Information Leaflet, the information overleaf and the current Health Check Questionnaire which I have completed. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I affirm that, to the best of my knowledge, all the information I have given is correct, and I am not at risk of any of the infections listed in the Donor Information Leaflet.
3. I agree that my blood will be tested for HIV and other conditions listed in the Donor Information Leaflet. I understand that if my blood gives a positive result for any of these tests, I will be informed, and given further advice.
4. I agree to my blood being blood-typed, and a small sample of it being stored.
5. I understand the nature of the donation process and the possible risks involved as explained in the Donor Information Leaflet.
6. I understand SNBTS will hold information about me, my health, my attendances and my donations and will use it for the purposes explained in the Donor Information Leaflet.
7. I agree to donate, and thereby give my blood to SNBTS, to be used for the benefit of patients. This may be by direct transfusion to a patient, or indirectly as explained in the Donor Information Leaflet.

Contact us

If you can't give blood at the moment, call us on **0345 90 90 999**, or contact us through our website to let us know. 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.

0345 90 90 999

nss.snbtsenquiry@nhs.scot

givebloodforscotland

@givebloodscot

givebloodscotland

This publication can be made available in large print, Braille (English only), audio tape and different languages. Please contact nss.equalitydiversity@nhs.scot for further information.

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