

Information sheet for blood donors

Blood and blood transfusions

Blood and its components perform many vital functions in the human body. A sick or injured person may need a blood transfusion to heal or to survive.. Blood transfusions are the most common medical procedures carried out in hospital. In Switzerland, transfusions are possible only if enough healthy volunteers agree to donate their blood. You can find further information on the role of blood, the various types of blood products and their relevance to patients on the [blood donor website](#).

You can also ask additional questions at any time.

Donating blood

Blood donation involves puncturing a vein on the inside of the elbow and withdrawing about 500 ml of blood in about 10 minutes. This rapid blood loss is generally well tolerated by a person in good health. That is why it is important for you to be in good health. If the results of our examinations (blood pressure and haemoglobin test), your answers to the medical questionnaire or interview pose a significant risk to your health, we will not collect your blood. However, even if all precautionary measures are taken, certain unwanted side effects may occur during or after a blood donation:

- a transient blood pressure drop,
- local complications at the puncture site (bruising, widening of a blood vessel, nerve damage).

Most of these side effects are harmless and of short duration. Nevertheless, very rare and potentially severe complications (e.g. longer-term reduced mobility of the arm) cannot be totally excluded. Your blood donation centre will give you useful advice on the best way to avoid or to treat these side effects.

You must wait a minimum of 12 hours before carrying out activities, occupations or hobbies in which you might endanger yourself or others.

Precautionary measures to reduce the risk of your blood donation for the recipient

Please read the following information on risk situations, laboratory tests and post-donation information carefully to avoid harm to recipients of your blood:

1. Risk situations

There is a risk of transmitting infectious agents that might be present in your blood even if you are not ill or do not feel ill. Your answers to the medical questionnaire help us to evaluate this risk. Take enough time to check your answers, because it is of utmost importance that you answer the questionnaire truthfully.

Based on the rules of Swiss Transfusion SRC regarding eligibility to donate blood, you are excluded from donating blood, either permanently or temporarily.

The following risk situations are reasons for permanent exclusion from blood donation

1. Positive test for HIV (AIDS), syphilis, hepatitis C and hepatitis B
2. Drug injection (at present or in the past)

The following risk situations may be a reason for deferral of blood donation

3. Sexual intercourse* for money, drugs or medication
4. Suffering from a sexually transmitted disease (with or without treatment) during the past 12 months
5. Change of sexual partner* during the past 4 months. A "new sexual partner" means:
 - a person with whom you have not had sexual contact OR
 - a former partner with whom you have re-started a sexual relationship in the last 4 months.
6. Sexual intercourse* with more than two partners during the past 4 months
7. Stays abroad in the last 6 months (more detailed information can be found at www.blutspende.ch under the term Travelcheck)
8. Medical (e.g., gastroscopy/colonoscopy) or cosmetic procedures/ treatments, and receipt of blood products
9. Taking antiretroviral therapy (PEP/PrEP) in the last 4 months
10. Sexual intercourse* during the past 4 to 12 months with partners exposed to any of the risk situations mentioned under 1 to 7.

*whether protected or not

At any time before, during or after donating, you may withdraw from blood donation and prohibit the use of your donated blood if it has not yet been transfused.

2. Laboratory tests

Every blood donation is tested for HIV (AIDS), hepatitis B, C and E viruses (jaundice), the syphilis agent and, if necessary, Parvo B19 and hepatitis A virus. For further information concerning the above-mentioned diseases and their transmission, paths visit [the FOPH website](http://www.foph.ch). Should any of the test results indicate any disease, you will immediately be informed and the blood you donated will not be used. However, there may be a time lapse between becoming infected and the laboratory tests showing a positive result. Therefore, if you donate blood during this time lapse, an infectious disease may be transmitted from you to the recipient without the transfusion centre being able to detect or prevent it. This is why it is of the utmost importance that you answer the questionnaire truthfully. The ABO, Rhesus D blood group and possibly other characteristics that may be relevant to transfusion medicine are determined for each donor (if necessary by genetic methods).

3. Post-donation information

After leaving the blood donation centre, it is of great importance that you inform your blood donation centre as soon as possible if:

- you or one of your close contacts is taken ill during the next few days,
- you realize that you did not answer one of the questions on the medical questionnaire correctly,
- your blood donation is followed by complications.

Please note that timely notification can prevent transmission of a previously unrecognized infectious disease to a patient.

Personal information given in connection with blood donation is subject to medical secrecy. It will be used within Swiss Transfusion SRC, the Regional Blood Transfusion Service and their contractors. The Regional Blood Transfusion Service is legally obliged to report notifiable diseases to the authorities. Only coded information (donor and product numbers) and blood group characteristics are passed on for patient care.