

# BLOOD DONATION – have **YOU** thought about it?

Have you ever thought about giving blood and not got round to it? Did you know that over 25% of us require blood at least once in our lifetime but only 4% of us give blood - many people would not be alive today if it wasn't for the generosity of blood donors? Most people can give blood, but all donors have to meet the eligibility criteria before their blood is accepted to ensure there is no risk harming you or the patients who will receive it.

**Why is blood needed?** Donated blood is a lifeline for many people needing long-term treatments, not just in emergencies. Your blood's main components: red cells, plasma and platelets are vital for many different uses. Everyone knows blood is literally a lifesaver for those who've been in an accident or need it to help survive treatments and operations. But for some, whose illness has no cure and that last battle they face just can't be won, a blood transfusion can help to improve their quality of life during their final months, weeks or even days. One unit of blood can save up to 8 premature babies.



Maintaining a regular supply of blood to all the people who need it is not easy. Blood components have a short shelf life and predicting demand can be difficult. Platelets have a shelf life of only 5-7 days.

Donors from all communities and ethnic backgrounds are needed so that the service can continue to meet the needs of all patients in England and North Wales now and in the years to come.

**Giving Blood:** Donating a unit of blood takes approximately 10 – 15 minutes and is relatively painless. Just under a pint is taken, 470 ml. Healthy individuals make this up quickly in a matter of days. Male donors can give blood every 12 weeks. That's approximately every 3 months or 4 times in a 12 month period. Female donors can give every 16 weeks or approximately every 4 months.



**What happens when you give blood?** Before going to give blood make sure you have had plenty to drink and something to eat. You should allow about 1 hour to give blood.

When you arrive at a blood donation clinic you will be given written information and asked complete a Donor Health Questionnaire. This will be followed by a confidential discussion with a member of the Donor collection team regarding your health and responses to the questionnaire.

A small drop of blood will be taken from your fingertip to make sure you are fit to donate blood. If all the checks are satisfactory you will be asked to give your donation.

After giving blood, you will be asked to rest and be given light refreshments before you leave.

After giving blood it is recommend that you drink plenty of fluids, avoid alcohol and avoid any strenuous activity for approximately 8 hours.

### **Signing Up to Become a Donor:**



If you want to register as a new blood donor then you must be aged between 17-65, weigh at least 50Kg and use a unique email address that can only be accessed by that person. Visit <https://my.blood.co.uk/Account/Register> in England, <https://www.scotblood.co.uk/become-a-donor.aspx> in Scotland and <https://www.welsh-blood.org.uk/enrol-online> in Wales to access your account, find a convenient donation session and book an appointment, view, change or cancel appointments, update your personal details, view your recent donation history.

**Make sure you can give:** There are many reasons why you may not be able to give blood. To prevent wasting time and unwanted journeys the following reasons may prevent you being able to give blood:-

- Travel outside the UK within the past 6 months for business or a holiday
- Holiday vaccinations?
- Heart conditions
- Infection within the previous two weeks of donation date. With summer coming on hopefully this can include a sting or insect bite. The bite must not be itchy or inflamed.
- Antibiotics – if you are on a course or completed a course within the last seven days
- Feeling unwell eg chesty cough, head cold, sore stomach, sore throat or an active cold sore
- Awaiting hospital treatment or currently undergoing medical investigations/tests.
- Had a tattoo or any skin piercing in the past 4 months?
- Dental visit within the previous 7 days

If any of the above apply to you further information is available at <http://www.blood.co.uk/donor-information/make-sure-you-can-give/> - alternatively you can contact the National Transfusion Service for your area to see if it will affect you donating blood – the contact numbers are:-

- 0300 123 23 23 (in England)
- 0845 90 90 999 (Scotland)
- 0800 25 22 66 (Wales)

### **Finding a Donation Session:**



It is easy to find a blood donor session near you.

In England go to <https://my.blood.co.uk/Home> to book a nearby donation session.

In Scotland go to <https://www.scotblood.co.uk/about-us.aspx> and click on the where to donate link

In Wales go to <https://www.welsh-blood.org.uk/giving-blood/where-to-donate> and click on the where to donate link.

**Amazing Stories:** Blood donors do an amazing thing when they give blood. Without blood donors, many patients simply would not be alive today, read some of their amazing stories here - <http://www.blood.co.uk/amazing-stories>

If you are not a blood donor as yet and are able to donate why not think about it – you never know when you or one of your loved ones will be grateful that someone else gave an hour of their time to donate.