

# Your donation

What happens when you  
volunteer to give blood  
to the Welsh Blood Service



[welshblood.org.uk](http://welshblood.org.uk)  
0800 252266

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# What happens when you give blood?

## Enrolling

When you volunteer to give blood for the first time your details will be registered with the Welsh Blood Service (WBS). All information relating to you and your blood donation is treated confidentially and stored securely on our database in accordance with the requirements of current Data Protection legislation.

## Health screening

Firstly we need to register you. Then, a member of our team will show you how to use the touch screen to complete the Donor Health Check Questionnaire, which will tell us about your general health and lifestyle. We want to make sure you are fit and well enough to donate blood and that your blood is safe to give to a patient. In strict confidence a member of our team staff will discuss the health questionnaire with you to assess your suitability.

### **We will ask you to sign to indicate that you understand the consequences of giving blood and to give consent for:**

- Your blood to be tested (for more information see **Testing blood donations**).
- Your blood to be used for the benefit of patients.
- We may also ask you to give us permission to do certain extra tests or to allow your donation to be used for a particular purpose. Relevant information will be provided in these cases.

If, for any reason, you are unable to donate, we will tell you why. In some instances we may need to ask you for permission to contact your GP to obtain further information before a decision can be made.

## Haemoglobin testing

We will take a small drop of your blood from your finger to check iron levels. If this shows you are unable to give blood today a blood sample will be offered and we will write to you and advise you what to do next.

## Giving blood

- You will be asked to lie down on a donation bed or chair where we will check your details.
- To make the vein more visible, a pressure cuff will be put around your upper arm, and this area will be cleaned with antiseptic.
- A needle attached to a blood bag will then be inserted. During your donation it is best to open and close your hand. This helps the blood flow smoothly. Our staff will keep a close eye on you to make sure everything is fine.
- It usually takes five to ten minutes to complete your donation of just under a pint. At the same time, blood samples are collected for testing. If there are any problems or if you are not happy to continue we will stop the donation early. Please let us know.
- After donation the needle will be carefully removed from your arm and a dressing applied. We will show you how to press on the site where the needle was. This is important in helping to prevent bruising.

## Pre-Donation Advice

- Make sure you eat and drink before donating.
- Make sure that you are comfortable, please wear clothing with loose sleeves as we will need to roll up your sleeve past your elbow when you give blood.
- We recommend that you have a full night's sleep before your donation. This will reduce the risk of you feeling unwell.
- It is essential to avoid alcohol before and after donating as this may affect hydration levels and delay recovery.
- It is also essential to avoid saunas, steam rooms and hot baths before and after donating.
- Avoid doing any vigorous exercise or heavy lifting the day of your donation – both before and after you've given blood.

## After your donation

After donating blood you will be asked to rest on the bed for a short period to make sure all is well before moving to the refreshment area. It is important to replace the fluid that you have lost so please – drink up!

## Testing blood donations

Your blood group is checked each time you donate. We also test your blood for HIV, hepatitis B, C, E, syphilis and HTLV<sup>1</sup>. If your donation gives a positive result for any of these tests you will be contacted and offered further advice and your donation will have to be destroyed.

Extra tests are carried out on some donations either because of information provided by you e.g. travel history or to meet the special needs of certain patients e.g. babies. These tests may include malaria testing and more detailed blood grouping.

The range of blood tests carried out by the WBS is under regular review and other tests may be introduced in the future.

1. Human T Lymphotropic Virus is a cause of serious blood and nervous disease. HTLV is known to be transmissible through transfusion.

All donations are routinely blood grouped and we do the following tests on every donation, no matter how many times you have given blood: HIV (the AIDS virus), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis E, HTLV (Human T Lymphotropic Virus) and Syphilis. People who carry these infections may remain healthy for many years, however, they can be passed on by blood transfusion and may have serious long-term implications for both donor and patient.

## Unclear reactions in our tests

In a few cases, donations may prove unsuitable because the donor's blood reacts against the testing chemicals that we use. While there are no health implications for the donor, such testing problems prevent us using the blood.

**We will send you a more detailed explanation if your donation gives an unclear reaction.**

## Using your donation for the benefit of patients

The vast majority of donations are used for patients e.g. after blood loss or cancer treatment.

We would like donors to know that their blood may also be used for purposes other than for direct transfusion to patients. As part of our commitment to a high quality service we sometimes use donations for other purposes essential to our work, such as quality assurance, education, training and testing.

We may also use the donation in the commercial preparation of healthcare related products within WBS or by other organisations. Your donation may be used for NHS authorised research which has been approved by an ethics committee.

It is possible that your donation might be used for such purposes and if it is, WBS will ensure that there is no implication for your health or welfare, you will not be identifiable, and any income received by us will be used to offset WBS cost and thus represent a benefit to the National Health Service in Wales.

## Possible consequence of giving blood

### Bruises

Sometimes bruises develop after giving blood. Bruises are not serious, most are small and fade within a few days. Rarely the bruising may worsen and become painful; if this happens call the WBS for advice, contact your GP or call NHS Direct.

For most people, giving blood is a very simple and trouble-free experience.

### Fainting

A few people feel faint during or after giving blood; if this happens please let one of our staff know immediately. Our staff are trained to take care of you and will make sure that you do not leave the blood donation clinic until you are feeling well.

If you feel faint after leaving the clinic you should lie down until you feel better. If you continue to feel unwell call the WBS for advice, contact your GP or call NHS Direct Wales.

## **Very uncommon risks**

Very infrequently, inserting the needle may cause inflammation of your arm, irritation of a nerve or puncture an artery. Our staff are trained to recognise these rare complications and you will be given immediate treatment and appropriate advice. If these occur after you have left the session you should call the WBS for advice, contact your GP or call NHS Direct Wales.

**Thank you for volunteering  
to give blood**

**To report a problem as a result of donating  
call 0800 252266 between 8am and 8pm  
Monday to Friday or 9am to 1pm Saturday.  
Outside these hours call (01443) 622000.**



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