



Feeling faint

Thank you for coming to donate blood today.

Some donors do feel faint after giving blood and some donors will faint. Most people adapt quickly to donating blood, but a few people can feel unwell.

If you have felt unwell whilst donating and to help you feel better and recover, we are advising you to follow this advice for 12 hours following your donation:

- Drink plenty of fluids - water or juice (avoid alcoholic drinks)
- Have a savoury or salty snack
- Eat your normal, regular meals
- Avoid hot rooms, hot showers/baths and standing in direct sun
- Avoid vigorous exercise (like cycling, jogging or going to the gym)
- Avoid rushing about
- Avoid standing for long periods

If you do feel unwell:

- Tell someone, either a friend or family member, and ask them to keep an eye on you
- Lie down and raise your legs. Get up slowly when you feel well enough. Drink plenty of fluids
- To reduce the chance of you feeling unwell at your next donation:
- Drink the full 500ml of water that you are asked to drink before you give blood. Having this volume of fluid in the stomach at the time of donation reduces the chance of fainting
- Ask staff to remind you about the leg exercises during your donation
- Ensure we know about your previous experience of feeling faint or fainting

The following tips may also be beneficial to consider for future donations.

Distractio**n** helps reduce nervousness so use your phone to listen to music, scroll social media or bring a book to read. We also ask donors to undertake something called 'applied muscle tension' or AMT. This is a simple behavioural technique that helps to maintain blood pressure, and so stops you from feeling faint or unwell. It is also a brilliant distraction technique! AMT involves tensing and relaxing the body's major muscles during the donation process.

On the day of donation and the evening before, ensure you drink plenty of fluids. Eat salty or savoury snacks. Avoid alcohol as this will considerably affect hydration and delay recovery.

Normal, regular meals before donating are necessary for maintaining your blood sugar and prevent light-headedness. Ensuring that your diet contains foods rich in iron (such as red meat, fish, beans, spinach and other green leafy vegetables, iron fortified cereals or raisins) will help to keep you feeling well during and after donation. Try to avoid foods that are high in fat or fried. Fatty intake can interfere with plasma collection and laboratory testing.

A full night's sleep (between 7 and 9 hours) the night before donating is beneficial to your well-being and recovery. This will help you to feel more alert when you donate, which will in turn reduce the risk of feeling unwell.

Tight clothing around the arms restricts blood flow and can cause bruises. Wear something which is loose and comfortable. Please note that staff will need to roll up your sleeve past your elbow when you donate, to allow easy access to your veins.

Eligibility criteria to donate may vary so know your medical history, body piercing and travel history to avoid any unnecessary delays.

With these general measures you can minimise the chances of fainting.

If you are worried or require further information you can obtain advice by ringing our donor helpline on

0300 123 23 23

NHS Blood and Transplant

NHS Blood and Transplant saves and improves lives by providing a safe, reliable, and efficient supply of blood and associated services to the NHS in England. We are the organ donor organisation for the UK and responsible for matching and allocating donated organs. We rely on thousands of members of the public who voluntarily donate their blood, organs, tissues, and stem cells. Thank you very much for your time and support and although we have advised you not to donate, you may still be able to help patients by encouraging others to become blood donors.

For more information, visit nhsbt.nhs.uk

Call **0300 123 23 23**