



Blood donation

What to expect when you give blood

Thank you for being a blood donor. It is important that you understand the donation procedure, so we have created this guide to give you more information.

If there's anything you're not sure of, please ask a member of our team.

What to expect when you donate blood

1. Welcome and preparation

Before donating blood, please read our 'Donor Consent Leaflet – Blood Donation' which explains the importance of blood safety. It's important to read this whenever you attend because advice can change. We want to give you sufficient information about the risks of donating blood and samples for testing so you can make an informed choice.

To prepare yourself, please ensure that you have eaten before you donate. You will be asked to drink 500ml of fluid before your donation. Drinking this over about five minutes will promote your wellbeing during and after donation.

2. Health screening

A Donor Carer, who wears a pale blue uniform, will collect you from the waiting area and escort you to either a health screening booth or to print a Donation Safety Check (questionnaire). You will be asked to confirm your identity. It is critical that we guarantee an accurate link between you, your Donation Safety Check and your donation. We must ensure that it's safe for you to donate and that your donation is safe to give to a patient. If you have received the questionnaire in the post, you can save yourself time at the session by completing the form and bringing it with you .

We'll ask some confidential questions based on your completed Donation Safety Check. There is a period of time where tests may not show if someone has been in contact with an infection. We trust you will answer these personal questions as fully as possible to ensure your blood is safe to transfuse to a patient.

You may be referred to a Registered Nurse for certain medical queries. Nurses wear a navy blue uniform. An explanation will always be provided if you are unable to donate today. You will be advised when you can next attend.

We take a small sample of your blood to check your haemoglobin (iron) level. If the result is within a specified range, you may be able to donate straight away. If your haemoglobin is lower than our acceptance level, we will tell you when you can next donate. If necessary, we may ask you to visit your GP.

After the health screening, we will collect the required equipment to take your donation and escort you to a donation chair.

3. Your donation

Blood bags and sample tubes are labelled with unique donor identification numbers. All collection equipment is single-use and sterile; only one blood bag is filled with your donation. A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm to maintain a small amount of pressure during your donation. The cuff is not used to measure blood pressure.

You will see staff cleaning their hands frequently using hand sanitisers. Your arm will be thoroughly examined to find a suitable vein before being cleaned with an antiseptic sponge containing chlorhexidine solution.

All donors are advised to do applied muscle tension exercises during donation. This is to maintain your blood pressure and promote your wellbeing during and after donation.

Following needle insertion, you should be comfortable during your donation. Donor Carers are available to you throughout your donation. If you do experience any discomfort or pain, please alert a team member immediately. We need to know if you feel any discomfort, so that we can take the appropriate action. This may include stopping the donation if it is in your best interests.

A machine constantly weighs and agitates your donation. It will stop automatically when your donation is complete. You may hear beeping noises from the machine; these inform us of the progress of your donation. A full donation is 470ml and will usually take between five and ten minutes.

If you require assistance, or have any concerns, please inform a member of staff or raise your non-donation arm.

After donation, the needle will be removed and a sterile dressing applied to your arm. We will explain how to care for your arm. Avoid using this arm to push on or to carry anything heavy. Do continue to apply pressure to your arm for several minutes after donation.

4. Refreshments

Please help yourself to cold drinks and snacks available at the refreshment table. We encourage donors to relax here and have at least two drinks following donation. You can continue doing applied muscle tension exercises while sitting. If you feel unwell, please remain seated and alert a member of staff immediately.

Please book an appointment for your next donation using our app [NHSGiveBlood](#) or create an account online at [blood.co.uk](#) Alternatively, call our 24-hour helpline: 0300 123 23 23

If there's anything you're not sure of, please ask a member of our team.

We welcome feedback on your experience today, to help us improve our service.

We look forward to welcoming you back soon.

Please hand this guide to a member of our team as you leave.

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**