

Why we ask men who have had sex with men not to give blood for at least 12 months

Securing the safety of the blood supply is our number one priority. We follow strict rules and regulations when collecting and processing blood to make sure we supply the safest blood possible.

We use two main strategies to keep blood donation as safe as possible.

- Selecting 'safe' donors
- Testing every donation

Selecting 'safe' donors means that we have to ask some people not to donate their blood. This includes all men who have had sex with other men in the last 12 months.

Why is the deferral period 12 months

We test all blood donations for HIV, hepatitis B (HBV) and C (HCV), syphilis and HTLV. However no testing process is perfect and we may miss infected donations because of the 'window period' between getting an infection and the test showing a positive result.

Evidence shows that men who have sex with other men, as a group, continue to be at statistically higher risk of contracting blood borne viruses such as HIV, HBV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Due to the nature of HBV infection it is necessary to allow a period of at least 12 months from any high risk activity before accepting a donation.

Principles of selecting donors

There are over 450 rules guiding donor selection and there are many groups of people who we ask not to donate either for a short period or forever.

Some people in these groups may have a very low risk of blood-borne infections and their blood would probably be safe to give to patients, but it is safest to ask everyone within the groups that have been identified not to give blood.

This can be disappointing and frustrating to some people who wish to donate blood. Our decisions are based on information and research about the effects our policies will have on ensuring the safest blood supply possible, not out of a desire to discriminate against any particular group.

Keeping our rules simple

The rule about men who have had sex with men is clear and simple. You can decide whether it applies to you without the need to discuss your personal life with our staff. The rule is based on an impartial assessment of available evidence. We ask that you observe it for the sake of blood safety.

Further information

If you would like more information please visit our website www.welshblood.org.uk to see our Position Statement together with detailed Questions and Answers, or write to:

**The Medical Director, Welsh Blood Service,
Ely Valley Road, Talbot Green, Pontyclun CF72 9WB**



Welsh Blood Service
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welshblood.org.uk

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