

Your donation

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



welshblood.org.uk

0800 252266

WBS Ref: 015E Version 9 12/13

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What happens when you give blood?

Registration

When you volunteer to give blood in the Welsh Blood Service (WBS) area for the first time, we enter your name, address and date of birth on the WBS computerised donor database. When you give us your details you are giving us permission to store them on our database. We will use this information to communicate with you and to record all your donation details, including all blood sample test results. All information about you and your donations is stored securely on this database according to the Data Protection Act (1998). Every time you volunteer to give blood, we will print a document called a session slip which you will be asked to check to make sure your details are correct.

Health screening

Each time you volunteer to give blood, we ask you to read the Blood Safety leaflet, the Welcome pamphlet and then complete a Donor Health Check questionnaire, after this we will ask you some specific questions in confidence. We do this to make sure you are well enough to donate and that your blood is safe to give to a patient.

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 opposite)
- 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.

Resting

The member of staff will ensure that you are feeling well then you can go to the refreshment area where you will be offered a drink and biscuits.

Testing blood donations

Your blood group is checked each time you donate. We also test your blood for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis and HTLV.¹ 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.

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 C; Hepatitis B; 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.

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

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. If this is the case the donor will be invited back for tests to be repeated.

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 quality assurance, laboratory work, education, training, research and development and/or for use in the commercial preparation of healthcare related products within the WBS or by other organisations.

Surplus plasma may be supplied to the manufacturing sector for use in the preparation of healthcare related laboratory tests.

It is possible that your donation might be used for such purposes and if it is the WBS will ensure that:

- There are no implications for your health or welfare
- You cannot be identified
- Any income received is used to offset WBS costs 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.

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.

**Thank you for
volunteering
to give blood**

**To report a problem as a result of donating
call 0800 252266 between 9am and 9pm
Monday to Thursday or 9am to 5pm Friday.
Outside these hours call (01443) 622000.**



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