

Giving Blood

June 14th is World Blood Donor Day

June 14th is World Blood Donor Day so this week I explain what is involved in donating blood. We all know that giving blood saves lives but we never know when we or one of our loved ones need the generosity of others to save our life through the simple gesture of donating blood. The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) organise blood donation in Ireland. Their website www.giveblood.ie is a reliable source of information and tells you where and when you can donate blood locally. So, give the gift of life and give blood.

Before Donation

Check your eligibility prior to attending the clinic

An illness or injury, however minor, may mean it is not safe to give your blood to a sick patient. Certain medications can also be harmful to patients. Therefore, it is important that you are well and healthy when you come to donate blood. Recent travel may also mean that you may not be eligible to donate. When you attend a clinic, you will have an opportunity to speak in confidence with a nurse but if you have any queries in relation to your health or travel history you can contact the IBTS Donor line at 1850 731 137. Information is also available in the "Can I give blood" section of www.giveblood.ie

Reduce your risk of fainting

Drinking plenty of cold, non-alcoholic fluids in the 24 hours prior to donating and eating savoury food and / or salty snacks the night before donation will greatly reduce the risk of fainting during or after donating. In addition, please ensure you eat something substantial in the 3 hours prior to your donation.

Children on clinics

New health and safety regulations are in place in relation to children attending with a donating adult. Due to the potential risk of a donor experiencing an adverse reaction during or after donating, a donating adult cannot be the sole supervisor of any child who is under 13 years of age. Please ensure that there is another adult designated to supervise any child who is less than 13 years of age during each part of the donation process.

Allow enough time

Although a donation only takes approximately 8 minutes, you will need to allow 60-90 minutes for the entire process, i.e. from the time you register to resting afterwards while enjoying refreshments.

During Donation

Registration

When you volunteer to give blood and attend a blood donation clinic, you will be asked to register with the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS). You will be asked for your name, address, date of birth and telephone numbers. This information is entered on the IBTS computerised donor database and is used to communicate with you, e.g. to send invitations to future blood donor clinics. Information related to you and your blood donations is stored securely on the database.

Donor Interview

You will be given information to read and a health and lifestyle questionnaire to complete. You will then have an interview with a trained healthcare professional to determine if you are eligible to donate. The purpose of the interview is to ensure that it is safe for you to donate and safe for a patient to receive your blood. All information provided by you will be treated in

the strictest confidence. There are many reasons why you may not be eligible to donate and if you are not eligible, the reason for this will be fully explained to you and you will be advised when you can return to donate.

Haemoglobin Testing

If you are eligible to donate you will have your Haemoglobin tested. This test is carried out on a capillary sample, i.e. a small drop of blood taken from your fingertip.

Donation

A needle attached to a blood pack is inserted into one of the veins in your forearm. Your donation is collected into this pack. Blood samples are collected from this pack during the donation and these are tested in the laboratory post-donation. 470ml of blood is collected during the donation and this takes approximately 8 minutes. You will be closely monitored by a staff member during this time.

After Donating

You are advised to remain in the donation clinic for at least 15 minutes after donating. This time is spent in the canteen area where you will be given refreshments. It is important to drink cold fluids after donation to rehydrate yourself. You will be given a card with "after donation" advice. It is important to keep this card for reference purposes.

If you feel unwell within 28 days of attending

If you become unwell within 4 weeks of donating you must contact the IBTS as soon as you become unwell. The reason for this is that any future illness may have consequences for the patient that has received or will receive your blood donation. Contact details are printed on the "after donation" advice card.

Possible complications of donation:

For most people, the process of giving blood is a simple and trouble-free experience. However, possible complications of giving blood include:

- Bleeding from needle site
- Bruising
- Fainting/ feeling weak or light headed

What about my next attendance?

You can donate every 90 days if you are eligible. The IBTS will contact you by text message with information about the next clinic in your area or you find a clinic on www.giveblood.ie.

Thank you from IBTS

150,000 donations a year or almost 3,000 donations a week are required for patients in Irish hospitals. The IBTS can only meet this requirement by the generosity of donors like you. Please donate regularly and encourage your friends and family to become donors too.

Thanks to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service and www.giveblood.ie for the information for this article

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans Pharmacies, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591 (Pearse St) or 04493 10266 (Clonmore).