WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

ABOUT GIVING

Blood

“Every time you give blood, it’s as if you were doing so for the first time.”

Héma-Québec applies the highest safety standards with respect to all blood collected. You must therefore read this leaflet when you give blood. The purpose of having you read this is to inform you about the procedure and the risks of an unsafe blood donation for the recipient.

On a few occasions during your visit to the blood donor clinic, we will ask you to identify yourself in order for us to ensure that the information provided agrees with that of your record.

You may change your mind at any time and decide not to give blood. In this case, simply return your record to the registration staff.

A blood donor clinic is not an appropriate place to have a check-up or to be tested for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or hepatitis B and C. These tests must be done in screening clinics or prescribed by your doctor.

AIDS AND HEPATITIS

AIDS and hepatitis B and C are caused by viruses that are spread through sexual contact or by sharing needles or syringes.

We want to make you aware of the fact that there is a risk period (called the “window period”) during which, even if you feel well and an HIV or hepatitis B or C screening test is negative, you could transmit these viruses to someone who may receive your blood.

As mentioned, sexual contact may contribute to the spread of these viruses, which may be transmitted to others by means of transfusion. This is why we question donors about this matter.

YOU CANNOT GIVE BLOOD IF:

• You are a man who has had sexual contact with a man during the last 5 years.
• You have accepted money or drugs in exchange for sexual contact since 1977.
• You have used a syringe to inject yourself with illegal drugs.
• You have had sexual contact during the last 12 months with a partner who has done any of the things listed above.
• You have spent more than 48 consecutive hours in prison during the last 12 months.
• You think you may have been infected with the AIDS or hepatitis B and C viruses.
• You have obtained a positive result for an HIV screening test or you have AIDS.

NOTE

Some people do not want to tell the nurse that they have participated in activities that put them at risk for transmissible diseases or may feel pressured by their peers into giving blood. For these reasons, it will be possible for you to make this known, in a confidential manner, by applying a sticker to your record. The nurse will explain the procedure to follow.

The expression “sexual contact” refers to the following acts, with or without a condom or other means of protection:

• Vaginal penetration (contact of the penis and vagina)
• Buccogenital contact (contact of the mouth or tongue and the vagina, penis or anus)
• Anal penetration (contact of the penis and anus)

GIVE BLOOD. GIVE LIFE.
BEFORE GIVING BLOOD

We recommend that you drink at least 500 ml of fluids (water, juice) before giving blood. During the interview, we will complete your record by:

- Checking your blood pressure, temperature and hemoglobin (iron level).
- Asking questions about behaviours that place you at risk with respect to transmissible diseases.
- Having you sign your record confirming that you have read and understood the information it contains.

WHILE GIVING BLOOD

- Blood collection will take 10 to 15 minutes.
- Single-use needles used for blood collection are sterile and disposable. You cannot contract an illness while giving blood.

AFTER GIVING BLOOD

- You should rest and drink at least 500 ml of fluids (water, juice) to make up for lost liquids.
- Apply pressure to the puncture site for about five minutes to stop any bleeding.
- Keep the bandage that covers the puncture site on for six hours.
- Avoid any intense physical activity for six to eight hours. Note that blood donation may impair performance of strenuous physical activities for a few days.
- If you feel weak, sit down with your head between your knees. Rest for a few minutes or lie down.
- Depending on the nature of your work or the particular sport you practice, you may need to wait a while before resuming your activities (for example: driving a bus, scuba diving).
- In order to constantly improve the blood supply, Héma-Québec may use the information obtained about you or contact you for study purposes.

ADVERSE REACTIONS AND DISCOMFORT

In general, donors do not feel any unpleasant sensations during the blood collection process. However, the following adverse reactions and discomfort can occur:

- Ecchymosis or hematoma (bruise)
- Pain or numbness in the arm
- Weakness with nausea/vomiting, fainting
- Fatigue the day after the blood donation
- Superficial phlebitis, very rarely (inflammation of a vein in the arm)
- Decrease of iron storage (ferritin) in frequent donors. In fact, every time you give blood, we check your hemoglobin, but not your iron reserve. Giving blood may result in a loss of iron and it can take several weeks for your body to replenish this loss. Eat a diet rich in iron to make up for this. For more information, request a copy of the "About iron" leaflet or visit our Website.

- If you give blood frequently (three or more whole blood donations for men, two donations or more per year for women), talk to your doctor about the possibility of checking your iron reserve.
- If you give blood frequently, consider the possibility of taking an iron supplement; get advice from your doctor or pharmacist. The optimal dosage for compensating for iron losses resulting from blood donations may vary; however, a dosage of elemental iron ranging from 19 to 45 mg per day, for 6 to 12 weeks after a donation, may be sufficient.

TESTS PERFORMED ON THE BLOOD COLLECTED

- Hepatitis B and C
- Human T-cell lymphotrophic virus (HTLV III)
- Syphilis
- AIDS virus (HIV)
- West Nile Virus (WNV): This test is systematically performed during the epidemiologic season. Outside this period, it is only performed if you have travelled outside of Canada in the last 56 days.

IF THE RESULTS OF ANY OF THESE TESTS ARE ABNORMAL

- Your blood donation will be destroyed.
- Your name will be added to a confidential list, indicating the period during which you will not be allowed to give blood, and you will be informed about this in a confidential manner. This list is shared with Canadian Blood Services.
- A positive test result will be reported to Québec public health authorities if required by law.

OTHER TESTS PERFORMED

- ABO, Rh and, if required, other blood groups
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV)
- Bacterial culture of platelets, if need be
- Hemoglobin type, if need be

USE OF YOUR BLOOD DONATION

Your blood donation will be used for the treatment of patients. The compatibility of ABO and Rh blood types between the donor and the recipient is taken into account when performing transfusions. Furthermore, other hereditary characteristics of the donor’s blood type must also be similar to that of the recipient for the treatment of some illnesses. This is why we ask you to complete the “Information” section of your record.

Finally, on rare occasions, your blood donation can also be used for teaching, quality control of the product or International Aid purposes.

ANY QUESTIONS?

The staff on site will be pleased to answer any questions you might have on this leaflet or on any other subject.