

How to prepare to give blood

Blood is a very important component of modern medicine. It cannot be created synthetically, so it must be collected from volunteer donors. Many people are afraid to donate for many reasons. These tips will help you prepare your body for donation and avoid adverse reactions.

Tips

✓ **Drink plenty of water** the night and morning before you donate. The leading cause of faintness and dizziness is a drop in blood pressure. Getting lots of water into your body helps keep your blood pressure up. Avoid caffeinated drinks because they dehydrate you.

✓ **Eat breakfast** to help keep your blood sugar up. This will help you feel better after you donate blood.

✓ **Avoid fatty foods** for 24 hours before you donate. Increased fat in your blood stream can make it hard to get accurate readings on some of the mandatory screening tests conducted on samples of your blood after you donate.

✓ **Eat iron-rich foods** for two weeks before your appointment; examples include: spinach, whole grains, eggs and beef. Also, Vitamin C helps increase iron absorption. Your iron level will be tested before you donate.

✓ **Have a snack** after the donation. Drink some juice and eat a light snack with a high sugar content to get your blood sugar back up.

✓ **Rest and relax for a few minutes** by enjoying your snack before leaving the donation site. Let your body adjust a bit before rushing off to the rest of your day. Plan to spend approximately 10 minutes in the canteen.

✓ **Eat a meal high in protein** after your donation; beef, chicken or legumes are excellent choices. You should also eat some vegetables and be sure to drink plenty of water.

✓ **Avoid heavy lifting** for the rest of the day. This includes weightlifting at the gym, as well as working at any job that requires heavy lifting, climbing or strenuous exercise.

Helpful hints:

- If you feel faint, tell The Blood Center staff and they will assist you into a reclining position on the chair. If you've already left the donation center, put your head between your knees to increase blood flow to your brain, or lie down and elevate your legs if you can.
- Relax. This helps with the drop in blood pressure and the lightheadedness, especially when it is your first time.
- Spread the word! Tell friends and family how you overcame your fear of donating and encourage them to donate as well.
- Once you are okay with the process, ask about platelet donations. Platelets are a vital product used to treat seriously ill patients.

Remember:

- Bring your photo ID.
- Appointments for whole blood are best, but walk-ins are always welcome.
- Platelet donors must make an appointment.