

I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DONOR SELECTION

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What is the purpose of donor selection?

Donor selection is the process, which determines the eligibility of a donor to donate blood on any given day. It has two purposes; to prevent any harm to the donor, and to prevent any harm to the recipient from the donor's blood products.

How is donor eligibility determined on a day-to-day basis?

All donors must fill out a Donor Questionnaire Form (DQF) prior to every donation. This form has several sections:

- Information about the donation process including detailed information about risks
- A series of questions for new and returned donors, mainly seeking information about past health
- A medical questionnaire for all donors seeking information about health since their last donation, travel history, and so on
- A donor declaration, which is a legal declaration asking about risks of infectious disease especially HIV, HCV and HBV.

What happens then?

All donors also have a confidential interview with a staff member in which the answers on the DQF are checked to determine that the donor meets the selection criteria to donate blood. Then the donor undergoes a miniphysical check which includes:

- A finger-prick to collect a drop of blood that is then checked for anaemia. This is done by measuring an iron protein in the blood called haemoglobin or Hb, the Hb level must be sufficient to permit loss of 470 mL for a whole blood donor.
- A blood pressure check. Persons with very low or very high blood pressure are deferred and referred to their general practitioner.

How does the Blood Service determine whether a donor should be deferred?

A document called *Guidelines for the Selection of Blood Donors* (GSBD) lists all the eligibility criteria for acceptance and deferral of blood donors, including a list of diseases, infections, medications and travel restrictions that will prevent a person from donating blood or limit use of components. The GSBD is based on another document called the *Council of Europe Guide to the Preparation, Use and Quality Assurance of Blood Components* (CoE Guide).



What are the most common reasons donors are deferred?

The most common reasons for temporary deferrals are:

- anaemia/iron deficiency
- a short-term illness or illness under investigation.

The most common reasons for permanent deferrals are:

- vCJD geographical area
- severe donor reactions
- past IV drug use.

Why are questions on infection necessary?

All infectious diseases have window periods – the time between exposure and the test becoming positive. It is only by the dual process of assessing risk factors by interview and then blood tests that we can maximise safety and prevent infection transmission. There are also infections with no available screening test, so donor history becomes important in preventing transmission of these infections.

BLOOD FACT

The Council of Europe has 47 members. Australia is a non-member state, invited to sign conventions.