



## DOs AND DON'Ts AFTER DONATING BLOOD

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest in the blood donation centre for at least 20 minutes</li> <li>• Keep pressure bandage/plaster on your arm for at least 30 minutes after donating</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids</li> <li>• Eat a salty snack at the donor centre</li> <li>• Eat regular meals during the day</li> <li>• Seek help if you feel faint, have pain or excessive bruising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lift anything heavy with the donation arm</li> <li>• Take part in strenuous activity</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Drink alcohol</li> <li>• Take a hot bath or shower</li> <li>• Stand for long periods</li> </ul>

### Fainting

If you feel faint after leaving the donation centre – light-headed, dizzy, shaky, hot or nauseous – lie down and raise your legs if possible.

Make sure you tell someone that you are feeling unwell so they can keep an eye on you.

Move slowly and carefully, taking care to sit and stand up slowly when you feel well enough.

Drink plenty of fluids.

If you do not feel better within a few hours consult your doctor or your local blood donation helpline.

### Bruising

Bruising is possible after blood donation, and although sometimes the bruise may look quite serious and dramatic most are harmless and will disappear over time.

It is normal for a bruise to spread out before fading.

The **R.I.C.E** guidance may help to speed up bruise recovery:

- **Rest:** allow time for the arm to heal, avoid lifting heavy objects such as heavy shopping or weights at the gym. Light gentle movement is recommended. After 36 hours return to normal activity.
- **Ice:** place an ice pack or a pack of frozen vegetables, wrapped in a cloth, onto the affected area. Do not place the ice directly onto the skin as this may cause freeze burns.
- **Compression:** press on the area where the needle was inserted.
- **Elevation:** when resting raise your arm on a pillow whenever possible.

After 36 hours place heat on the affected area, in the form of a warm cloth. This can be applied to the bruise for approximately 10 minutes, 2-3 times a day and may help increase blood flow to the bruised area allowing the skin to reabsorb the bruise more quickly.

### **Arm pain**

You should be comfortable during your donation session. If your arm hurts or feels sore while giving blood please alert a member of staff.

Pain or discomfort in the arm or hand may be related to a possible tendon or nerve injury, or a punctured artery. These are very rare risks associated with needle insertion, and clinic staff will be able to help in such an event.

If the pain persists after the donation session do not stop arm normal arm movements as this could cause further complications – gentle exercise will help your recovery.

If you experience any of the following please contact your doctor or your local blood donation helpline to gain medical assistance as early as possible:

- stiffness, weakness or a dull ache in the arm
- pain that gets significantly worse when you move the affected arm
- severe or worsening pins and needles
- severe or worsening swelling or the development of a lump in the arm
- redness and/or inflammation of the donation arm
- change of skin temperature or colour to your donation arm or hand.

If any of the following symptoms arise a punctured artery may have occurred. This is when the needle is inserted into an artery rather than a vein.

- bleeding has restarted
- arm swelling that is large or increasing in size
- numbness or pins and needles in the arm, hand or fingers
- severe or worsening pain
- coldness or paleness of the lower arm, or hand of the affected arm

If this happens make sure you raise your arm and apply firm pressure. Then go to the Accident and Emergency department at your nearest hospital, ask someone to

take you or dial the local emergency phone number and take this information with you.

You must not use this arm to donate blood in the future.

### **If your HAEMOGLOBIN level was too low to donate blood**

There are three common reasons:

- Variation between people – some of us just normally have a ‘low-ish’ level.
- Iron – we all need iron to make haemoglobin. If your iron stores are low, the haemoglobin may fall below normal (or below the donation level).
- Testing procedure – while we take great care with our test in the session, occasionally it underestimates the amount of haemoglobin in the blood.

### **Boosting iron levels:**

You can boost iron levels by trying to eat a well-balanced diet.

Although iron from non-meat sources is more difficult for the b

to absorb, people following a well-balanced vegetarian or vegan diet should get enough iron in their diet.

Every day try to eat three portions of food listed below that are good sources of iron:

- breakfast cereals - some cereals are fortified with iron
- pulses and beans - in particular baked beans, chickpeas and lentils
- nuts (including peanut butter)
- brown rice
- tofu
- bread - especially wholemeal or brown breads
- leafy green vegetables – especially curly kale, watercress, broccoli and spinach
- dried fruit - in particular apricots, raisins and prunes
- lean red meat, turkey and chicken
- fish - including mackerel, sardines, salmon, pilchards and shellfish
- eggs

### **Remember to include Vitamin C**

Vitamin C helps you to absorb more iron. So to get the most from the food you eat, have vitamin C rich foods with meals: for example fresh fruits and vegetables, or drinks such as fresh orange juice.

Avoid drinking tea just before, after or with meals as this may reduce the absorption of iron from foods.