

Am I eligible to donate blood?

The ten most common concerns



1. Low iron

Low iron is the most common reason for temporary deferral. The amount of hemoglobin in your blood varies daily. In many cases, a change in diet is all that's needed to raise your iron count to acceptable levels. Iron rich foods include lean meats, eggs, whole grains, leafy green vegetables, dried fruits, and legumes. Iron absorption is increased by eating foods high in vitamin C and decreased by caffeine found in tea, coffee or soft drinks.



2. Blood pressure medications

Any medication currently used for treating high blood pressure is acceptable, provided the donor has been on the medication for at least 30 days and the blood pressure falls within the acceptable range. During the first 30 days on anti-hypertensive drug therapy, the body's blood pressure may fluctuate, so prospective donors are deferred during this time frame for their own safety.

3. Antibiotics

Anyone who is currently taking an antibiotic for an infection will be deferred until 24 hours after the last dose. The deferral is not usually due to the antibiotic, but the risk of passing on an active infection to the blood recipient. Injected penicillin or bicillin has a longer deferral period. Donors unsure of the medication used will be deferred for a 28-day period.

4. Other medications

Taking medications is NOT an automatic deferral. Most are perfectly acceptable. With so many different medicines, the easiest thing to do is to ask the Center's Quality Assurance Department at (210) 731-5555, or bring a list of your medications to the donation site.



5. Travel outside the United States

Like medications, foreign travel or residency does not automatically prevent you from donating. There are many variables as to where, when and how long. Again, the best course of action is to call the Center and ask, or bring a list of any foreign travel or residency to the donation site.

6. Recent surgery or dental work

Donors who have had surgery are deferred until they are released by the attending surgeon and been allowed to return to unrestricted activity. Donors who have had extensive dental work (tooth extraction, crown preparation, root canal) are deferred for 24 hours. Dental cleanings or simple fillings do not cause a deferral.

7. Hepatitis

Any form of hepatitis results in inflammation of the liver. Some forms are chronic and may lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Anyone who has a history of hepatitis or jaundice after their 11th birthday is deferred indefinitely.

8. Diabetes

Some diabetics are still able to contribute to the blood needs of south Texans. Type II diabetics (non-insulin dependent) are eligible to donate blood provided the diabetes is controlled by diet and/or oral antidiabetic drugs. Diabetics taking injectable insulin may donate blood if they are stabilized and have not changed their insulin dosage within two weeks of donating.

9. Ear or body piercing and tattoos

Those who have had their ears pierced by the sterile gun method or in a physician's office are acceptable blood donors. Potential donors who have had a body piercing or tattoo at a licensed facility in Texas are also eligible to donate. Donors must provide the name of business where the piercing/tattoo was performed. This does not include body alterations, (tongue separation or branding).

10. History of cancer

Patients who are in remission and have had no recurrence of cancer after passing the five-year mark from completion of treatment may give blood. (Exceptions are those patients with melanoma, leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma.)

Persons with specific questions about eligibility, can e-mail their question to donornotification@bloodntissue.org.