Information for Donors with Haemochromatosis

I have haemochromatosis, can I donate?

People with genetic haemochromatosis, who have finished intensive venesection and are in the maintenance stage of their treatment, can be accepted as blood donors providing they meet all the donor selection criteria and are well with no tissue damage due to iron overload and are not on any medication for their condition. Blood donors with haemochromatosis and the doctor who manages their condition are advised that they still remain under the care of the hospital consultant for monitoring of the disease and the effects of venesection. NHSBT collects blood for the benefit of patients and does not provide any form of treatment – we will not monitor your condition or perform extra tests. Your managing Consultant is also responsible for informing you how frequently you should donate (see ‘how often can I donate?’). It is extremely important that you donate at the intervals your doctor recommends.

How do I become a blood donor?

If you have haemochromatosis and would like to enrol as a blood donor, please call us on 0300 123 23 23 or you can write to us at:

NHS Blood and Transplant
Customer Services
Colindale Avenue
Colindale
London
NW9 5BG

What happens next?

Once you have contacted us to become a blood donor, we will send you a form which you need to complete with your managing Consultant and return to us in the SAE. The information will be received by a doctor or nurse who is a member of the NHSBT Clinical Support Team and who will inform you by letter as to whether or not you are eligible to donate blood.

What are your age limits?

All first time blood donors must be between the ages of 17 and their 66th birthday. If you are between 66 and 70, then you must have given blood (or had a venesection) successfully and without feeling unwell at least once before in the past. If you are over 70 then you may donate as long as you have donated blood (or been venesected) successfully and without feeling unwell in the last 2 years. So, if you are over 66, please let us know the date you had your last venesection or donated blood.
How often can I donate blood?

NHSBT Blood donors may routinely donate at a minimum interval of 12 weeks. To ensure donor safety, our computer systems are set so that donors may donate no more frequently than this. Many donors with haemochromatosis, are currently donating at 12 weekly intervals or longer. However, some donors with haemochromatosis may need to donate blood more often than this. If your managing Consultant recommends that you donate blood more frequently, we can make special arrangements for you to do this but it will be essential that you have a prebooked appointment before you attend. The absolute minimum donation interval for donors with haemochromatosis is 6 weeks.

How do you arrange for me to donate more frequently?

Please discuss how often you should donate with your managing Consultant. If your doctor advises you should donate more frequently than 4 times a year you should inform us of this on the form you will complete, then we will need to arrange your donations through a more complicated process. Because our computer system is set so that no donor donates less than 12 weekly, you will not be able to attend a donation session on a ‘walk in’ basis. You will need to arrange an appointment by ringing our Helpline who will advise you of a nearby session on a date convenient to yourself. If the session is convenient for you, the Helpline operator will call you back to confirm the appointment once they have arranged a special slot. Because we have to arrange a special appointment, you will need to book appointments 2 weeks in advance. If you miss an appointment or are ineligible to donate at your appointment (due to an illness, for instance) you will need to rebook again in advance. You will need to inform your managing Consultant if this happens, in case hospital venesection needs to be arranged for you instead.

I already donate at 12 weekly intervals – do I need to do anything?

If you are already an NHSBT donor who has haemochromatosis, and are happy to donate at 12 weekly intervals or longer, then you need do nothing. You can continue to donate as usual. If you wish to donate more frequently, please inform a member of the donation staff or call our helpline, and we will write to you to clarify arrangements.