

Iron Deficiency Information

Thank you for coming to donate blood.

We care about your health and want you to know that donating blood reduces iron stores in your body. In many people, this has no effect on their health. However, in some people, particularly younger women and frequent donors of either gender, blood donation may remove most of the body's iron stores. We want you to understand these issues more clearly.

What happens to me during a blood donation?

Red blood cells are red because of the way iron is carried in hemoglobin, a protein that brings oxygen to the body. Therefore, the removal of red blood cells during blood donation also removes iron from your body. The impact of this iron loss on your health varies among donors.

How does blood donation affect iron stored in my body?

Iron is needed to make new red blood cells to replace those you lose from donation. To make new red blood cells, your body either uses iron already stored in your body or uses iron that is in the food you eat. Many women have only a small amount of iron stored in their body, which is not enough to replace the red blood cells lost from even a single donation. Men have more iron stored in their body. However, men who donate blood more often (more than two times per year) may also have low iron stores.

Does the blood center test for low iron stores in my body?

No, the blood center tests your hemoglobin but not your iron stores. You may have a normal amount of hemoglobin and be allowed to donate blood even though your body's iron stores are low.

How may low iron stores affect me?

There are several possible symptoms associated with low iron stores. These include fatigue, decreased exercise capacity, and pica (a craving to chew things such as ice or chalk). In addition, having low iron stores may increase the possibility of having a low hemoglobin test, preventing blood donation.

What can I do to maintain my iron stores?

While eating a well-balanced diet is important for all donors, simply eating iron-rich foods may not replace all the iron lost from blood donation. Taking multivitamins with iron or iron supplements may help replace iron lost. If you have concerns regarding your iron levels, please consult your physician for additional guidance.

For additional information addressing iron deficiency, log onto www.anemia.org.

Risks and Hazards of Whole Blood Donation

Minor

Hematoma
Allergic Reaction
General Weakness
Dizziness / Light Headedness

Major

Fainting with possibility of injury
Nerve Damage
Arterial Puncture

Long Term

Iron deficiency with
or without anemia



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