

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[FAQs for Donating Blood & Platelets](#)

[Blood and Bone Marrow Treatment](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

[How can I be sure the blood I get during my surgery is the blood I donated?](#)

[What happens if something is found in my blood when it is tested?](#)

[What if my surgery is postponed?](#)

[If I don't use blood I donated for my surgery, what happens to it?](#)

[Are there fees to use my own blood?](#)

[Can a child donate blood for his or her own use?](#)

[Back to top](#) ^

1. Can a patient donate his or her own blood?

When blood transfusions are anticipated (such as during surgery), you may be able to donate your own blood in the weeks preceding your surgery, if your doctor approves. This is called an autologous donation.

Generally, a patient's own blood is the safest blood to transfuse because disease transmission and allergic reactions are eliminated.

[Back to top](#) ^

2. Will giving blood make me weak before my surgery?

No. Your doctor will determine whether donating your own blood for later use is right for you. The Donor Room staff will also check to make sure you are healthy enough to donate and that any medical conditions you may have will not prevent your body from producing new blood cells, which usually begins 24 hours after donating.

[Back to top](#) ^

3. How soon before my surgery should I give blood?

Once your doctor approves of your donating blood and notifies the Donor Room, you may donate weekly prior to surgery. Donations must be completed five working days before the date of your surgery. This allows the necessary time to process and test your blood and gives your body enough time to replace the blood volume (plasma) that was lost when you donated blood.

[Back to top](#) ^

4. What if I am not able to give enough blood for my needs?

Any additional blood you may need will be supplied by volunteer donors or, if you prefer, by your family and friends. All blood, regardless of the source, is tested to make sure it is as safe as possible. The blood you receive will also be tested to ensure that it matches your blood type.

[Back to top](#) ^

5. How do I make an appointment for an autologous donation?

Your doctor's office can schedule an appointment by calling our Blood Donor Room: [212-639-8177](tel:212-639-8177). Autologous donations are scheduled Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

[Back to top](#) ^

6. How can I be sure the blood I get during my surgery is the blood I donated?

When you donate blood, it is labeled with identification tags and bar codes, and it is tracked as it is processed, tested, and delivered to the operating room.

[Back to top](#) ^

7. What happens if something is found in my blood when it is tested?

You and your doctor will be notified of any irregularity in your blood and your doctor may be asked to authorize transfusion of the blood to you.

[Back to top](#) ^

8. What if my surgery is postponed?

Your surgeon should contact the blood bank if your surgery is postponed. If your doctor requests, we can store your blood in the hospital's blood bank for up to 35 days.

[Back to top](#) ^

9. If I don't use blood I donated for my surgery, what happens to it?

If you do not need the blood you donated, it will be discarded.

[Back to top](#) ^

10. Are there fees to use my own blood?

Yes. You will be charged a fee to cover the costs of collecting, testing, and processing the blood you receive, regardless of whether you or another donor supplies the blood.

[Back to top](#) ^

11. Can a child donate blood for his or her own use?

Under certain circumstances and if your child's doctor approves, he or she may donate blood for his or her own use. If you are interested in an autologous donation for your child, please discuss this option with your child's doctor.

[Back to top](#) ^

PREVIOUS

[Platelet Donations](#)

NEXT

[Donating Blood to a Specific Patient](#)

[Communication preferences](#)

[Cookie preferences](#)

[Legal disclaimer](#)

[Accessibility statement](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Price transparency](#)

[Public notices](#)

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