Ready to start planning your care? Call us at 800-525-2225 to make an appointment.
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Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

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1. Can you explain the blood donation process?

Donating blood takes about an hour from the time you arrive until you are ready to leave. First, you must complete a registration form with basic information such as your name, address, and birthdate. You must also present identification that shows your name and your photo or signature.

Then, one of our medical professionals will check your blood pressure, temperature, and hemoglobin level (iron); take a look at your arm to make sure it is clear of any signs of infection or intravenous drug use; and ask you confidential questions about your health to ensure that you are eligible to donate blood that day.

The actual donation takes between ten and 20 minutes. Afterward, you will be given juice and/or water to replenish the fluid donated and refresh you before you leave the Blood Donor Room. There are also cookies available for a snack.

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2. Are there any special instructions I should follow before donating whole blood?

You should eat a regular meal and drink plenty of fluids one to two hours before donating blood.

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3. Does it hurt to donate blood?

A skilled, professionally trained staff member will collect your blood. Except for a slight sting when the needle is inserted, you should not experience any pain during the donation.

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4. How long will it take to replenish the pint of blood I donate?

Your body will replace the blood volume (plasma) within 48 hours. It will take four to eight weeks for your body to completely replace the red blood cells you donated. The average adult has eight to 12 pints of blood. You will not notice any physical changes related to the pint you donated.

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5. What happens to the blood I donate?

All blood is tested for blood type, hepatitis, HIV (the AIDS virus), HTLV, and syphilis. Then it is separated into components — red blood cells and plasma — to help patients recover from cancer treatment and regain their strength.

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6. How often can I give whole blood?

You can donate whole blood every 56 days.

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