

Health and Nutrition

Guidelines on Blood Donation



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Introduction

Blood donation is a noble action that saves. Below is some useful information for blood donors.

Blood Donation Facts

- Donating a liter of blood can save three lives
- Donation takes only about 20 minutes
- Blood donation has many health, psychological, and social benefits for blood donors
- Regular blood donation (5-4 times a year) is also good for the donor's health
- The volume of donated blood is 450 ml; here are 6 liters of blood in the body.



Importance of Nutrition and Hydration

- Adequate fluid intake and good nutrition help in replacing the donated blood within 24 hours of donation. Red blood cells need about eight weeks for complete replacement.
- Good nutrition provides your body with the nutrients and fluids needed to make new blood cells, avoid anemia and reduce the risk of dizziness

Nutrients Needed

- **Iron:** Found in red meat, chicken, liver, egg yolk, fortified cereals, molasses, green leafy vegetables, dried fruits (such as dates, prunes, figs, apricots and raisins), dried beans, peas and lentils. Iron from animal sources is absorbed in the intestines better than the iron obtained from plant sources. Vitamin C helps iron be absorbed from plant sources. It is found in tomatoes, broccoli, green peppers and citrus fruit — especially oranges. It is advisable to combine vitamin C rich food with iron rich foods from plants at the same meal.
- **Folic acid and Vitamin B12:** Needed to form red blood cells. Folic acid and Vitamin B12 are found in lean meat, eggs, whole grains and fortified cereals.
- **Protein:** Necessary to make new blood cells. Protein is found in milk and meat products, lean meat, seafood, chicken, eggs, dried beans, hummus and lentils.



General Safety and Health Guidelines

- Individuals who plan to donate blood and have high blood pressure or diabetes must them controlled.
- Anyone under the age of 17, underweight (weight under 50 kg), or those with infectious diseases or anemia CANNOT Donate.
- Donors are advised not to donate blood when they are hungry or dehydrated.
- Before donation: Drink adequate amounts of water and eat a good meal two hours before donation. Drink water after blood donation to replace fluids as blood is mostly water. In addition, consume a fruit or drink a cup of fruit juice to prevent blood sugar from dropping. This is healthier than consuming fatty meals after blood donation.
- Eat healthy and well-balanced meals that are rich in protein, iron, and other nutrients and increase your fluid intake before and after blood donation. Good nutrition helps you to restore your blood volume after blood donation.
- Practice regular activity to strengthen your body and improve blood circulation. Avoid exercise (particularly strenuous exercise) immediately after blood donation.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking (active or passive), as they do not help your body make new blood cells.
- Reduce caffeine intake, as caffeine reduces iron absorption, depletes the body's fluids and may lead to dehydration. It is better to replace caffeinated drinks with decaffeinated ones.
- If you wish to use vitamin or mineral supplements, it is advisable to speak to your physician first.
- Do not drive for long distances after blood donation.
- If you experienced dizziness during or after donation, inform the blood bank technician, keep your head lower than the donation chair, and drink an adequate amount of water (around 2 cups). It is important to not leave the donation chair by standing quickly. It is safer to stand up from the donation chair slowly to avoid falling.