

Donation Myths and Facts

MYTH: All donations involve surgery.

FACT: The majority of donations do not involve surgery. Today, the patient's doctor most often requests a peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) donation, which is non-surgical.

The second way of donating is marrow donation, which is a surgical procedure.

In each case, donors typically go home the same day they donate.



"It didn't hurt, it wasn't scary and yes, I would do it again - in a heartbeat. Donating has been the single most rewarding experience of my life."

Victoria, PBSC donor

MYTH: Donating is painful and involves a long recovery.

FACT: There can be uncomfortable but short-lived side effects of donating PBSC. Due to taking a drug called filgrastim for five days leading up to donation, PBSC donors may have headaches, joint or muscle aches, or fatigue. PBSC donors are typically back to their normal routine in one to two days.

Those donating marrow receive general or regional anesthesia, so they feel no pain during donation. Marrow donors can expect to feel some soreness in their lower back, for one to two weeks afterward. Most marrow donors are back to their normal activities in two to seven days.



"The evening of donating and the couple days after were painful, but hospital staff were really caring and the recovery went fast. It was a great experience."

Alan, marrow donor

"The shots were like getting the flu but it's only for five days and you're giving someone a lifetime. I was a match for a 2-year-old little boy. I just want him to have a long and healthy life—to have every opportunity I had."

Patrick, PBSC donor

MYTH: Donating is dangerous and weakens the donor.

FACT: Though no medical procedure is without risk, there are rarely any long-term side effects. Be The Match® carefully prescreens all donors to ensure they are healthy and the procedure is safe for them. We also provide support and information every step of the way.

Because only five percent or less of a donor's marrow is needed to save the patient's life, the donor's immune system stays strong and the cells replace themselves within four to six weeks.



“I did feel discomfort that night. It wasn't pain; it was stiffness. The little discomfort I went through was nothing compared to what it meant to me, to be involved in saving another person's life.”

Erma, marrow donor

MYTH: In marrow donation, pieces of bone are removed from the donor.

FACT: No pieces of bone are taken during marrow donation. Only the liquid marrow found inside the pelvic bone is needed to save the patient's life.

MYTH: Donors have to pay to donate.

FACT: Donors never pay to donate. We reimburse travel costs, and may reimburse other costs on a case-by-case basis.



“My donation experience was overall very positive. A minor inconvenience really, not much different than giving blood. Bottom line, very little time, very little pain for a lifetime of satisfaction that I had a chance to save someone's life.”

Andrew, PBSC donor



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The National Marrow Donor Program® is entrusted to operate the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program, including the Be The Match Registry®.