

Autologous and Directed Blood Donations

Patient and family education from the Blood Donor Center

Children's National Medical Center offers a *Directed Donor Program*, which allows a patient's parents, family or friends to donate blood to be used during the patient's hospital stay and/or for procedures. In addition, some patients may donate for themselves for elective surgeries through the *Autologous Donation Program*.

Directed Donations

Children's Hospital agrees with other blood transfusion experts that there is no evidence that blood from directed donors is safer than from regular volunteer blood donors. However, we recognize that this service is frequently requested by many parents and we offer such a program. All blood donors, volunteer and directed, must meet all of the AABB's standards and the donated blood must be tested in accordance with the Federal Drug Administration standards.

The major medical objection to directed donations is that with the loss of anonymity, which is unavoidable with such a donation, donors may be less truthful about medical history. This is especially true when pressure is placed on family members and friends to donate. In addition, most directed donors are "first-time" donors and have not been tested to see if their donations could lead to disease transmission.

Our intention is to provide parents and family the opportunity to contribute positively to the care of their child or family member. Parents/family members are under no obligation to supply directed blood donors for their child or family member. Children's Hospital will supply blood for any patient requiring a transfusion who does not have directed donor units available. We always welcome your assistance in providing blood to help our patients.

To participate in the Directed Donation Program

1. Your child's physician must complete a *Request for Directed/Autologous Blood Donation*. A parent or legal guardian must then sign the Request. Patients 18 years of age or older may sign for themselves. On page 4 of the Request is an Authorization for Directed Donation. On this page, please identify in writing those persons that you approve for directed donation. Once the Request and Authorization are completed they should be hand-carried or mailed to the Blood Donor Center. Directed Donations cannot be made until the Blood Donor Center receives both the completed Request and Authorization. (Parents initiating the Directed Donation Request over the phone with their child's physician, can make arrangements to sign the forms in the Blood Donor Center.)
2. Find out you child's blood type and that of anyone who may be giving blood for your child, If blood types are unknown, you can arrange to have your child's blood typed at Children's, through your pediatrician's office, or at a local hospital.
 - Your child's physician can arrange for this to be done locally. You will need to obtain a copy of these results and forward them to Children's Blood Donor Center.
 - For your child's blood type to be done here at Children's, you must have your child registered, and for some health plans, pre-approval.
 - Results of the blood typing done at Children's will be available within 4 hours. Call the Blood Donor Center at 202-476-KIDS for results.
3. Not all blood types may be compatible with your child. To avoid confusion, we recommend that you obtain a *written record* of your child's blood type unless your child's blood was confirmed here. We will then help you select donors of the correct blood type for your child.

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4. Once the parent or legal guardian has completed both the Request and the Authorization forms, appointments can be scheduled to donate the blood. The donors may call to schedule their appointments themselves. The following information is required when making appointments: The patient's name and date of surgery or transfusion, the donor's name and daytime phone number. Directed Donations will be taken by appointment only. Due to the limited number of appointments available per day, we suggest that the donors call 202- 476-KIDS at least a week in advance. Donations should take place no later than three working days prior to the scheduled procedure.

Autologous Donations

An autologous transfusion is the collection and re-infusion of the patient's own blood. An autologous blood transfusion is the treatment of choice for appropriately selected patients. It is considered the safest blood one can receive. Mature children at least 10 years of age and a minimum of 50 pounds, who have the approval of their physician and the Blood Donor Center Medical Directors are eligible to donate if they meet all the medical criteria. Autologous donations can provide some or all of the blood needed by the surgical patient. However, autologous donations do not guarantee that the patient will not need additional blood.

To participate in the Autologous Donation Program

1. In order for a patient to give an autologous unit or units of blood for a scheduled surgical procedure, the patient's physician must complete the Request for Directed/ Autologous Blood Donation. Follow the same procedure for the request form as outlined in the Directed Donation Program section.
2. Patient's giving autologous blood should ask their physician to prescribe iron supplements as soon as possible (before their donation) in order to build up their red blood cells. They should continue to take the iron after their donation and through to their surgery.
3. Autologous donors should try and schedule their donation(s) so they have a week to 10 days to recover before their surgery. Patients may donate one unit per week. Donations can begin as early as five weeks before surgery.
4. It is important for the donor to eat a light, low-fat meal and drink plenty of fluids one to two hours before the donation.

What You Should Know About the Directed/Autologous Donation Program

- All directed donors must pass the medical criteria federally required for all blood donors. No exceptions will be made.
- It takes a minimum of three working days, from the time of donation, to test blood before it is ready for patient use.
- The directed units of blood collected will be held until the patient is discharged, or 14 days from the date of donation, whichever comes first. At that time the donated blood will be made available to other hospital patients. Autologous units are held until the blood expires.
- Every effort is made to assure that directed/autologous donations will be available for the patient. However, Children's Hospital does not guarantee their availability. In the case of extreme emergency, the blood may need to be used for other patients.
- Just as with regular blood donor units, directed and autologous blood units have a slight risk of being lost, damaged, misidentified, or destroyed during shipping, storage, and processing of the blood.
- Before transfusion, a sample of the donor blood is carefully tested with a sample of your child's blood to determine if the two are compatible; rarely the directed donor's and your child's blood will be incompatible.
- If products other than directed/autologous units are needed by the patient, blood from the general blood bank supply will be provided at the discretion of your child's physician.
- If products other than Whole Blood or Red Blood Cells are to be requested for your child, please contact the Blood Donor Center for details.
- There is an additional charge, to cover administrative costs, that will be added to your child's hospital bill for each unit of directed or autologous blood that is held for your child. Check with your insurance company to see if this is a covered service.

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