

Talking to your children

Talking to your children about your decision to donate is a great way to teach them about helping others. No matter their age, they will likely have questions. Here are some common questions and suggested answers to help you prepare:

Q: Why do you have to go to the doctor? Are you sick?

- No, I'm not sick. I'm helping someone who is very ill so they hopefully get better.
- Their blood-making cells aren't working right, and I'm going to give them some of mine. My body will make new ones, so it's nothing to worry about. It's a chance to do something good for someone in need. Can you think of ways you can help others?

Q: What are blood-making cells?

- Blood-making cells are like tiny factories inside your body that make new blood. They live in your bone marrow, which is the soft, spongy part inside your bones. These cells make the different parts of your blood, like red blood cells that carry oxygen, white blood cells that fight infections, and platelets that help stop bleeding. When someone is sick and their blood-making cells aren't working, they need new ones to get better. So, I'm going to share my blood-making cells to help them.

Q: Who are you helping? Why are they sick?

- I signed up to help anyone who needs new blood-making cells. A doctor is checking if I'm the best match for someone who is sick. The most important thing is to help them get better.

Conversation tip: It's okay to share some general information you know, along the lines of, "I'm matching a young, female patient." Use caution when mentioning the age if the patient is younger, as this might make your child worry that they could get sick too.

Q: Can I give my blood-making cells to help someone?

- **Children:** You have to be 18 to donate. When you're older, you can decide if you want to sign up to be a donor.
- **Teens:** You need to be 18 to donate because you must legally make your own decision. When you turn 18, I can help you with the information to register if you want me to.

Q: Why do you need to go away? Can I come with?

- There are only specific clinics and hospitals that can handle this type of donation. I need to go to one of those places to make sure everything goes well.
- This trip is to help someone get better. Once I have donated, I'll be on my way back home. I can bring one person, but it needs to be an adult. I'll be back as soon as I am done.

Conversation tip: If you're interested in having your child(ren) go with you to the donation, check with your donor center representative regarding guidelines and recommendations on this topic.

Health concerns

Q: What do you mean you will feel sick for a while? When are you going to feel better?

- **Peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) donation:** The doctor will give me shots and medicine to increase my blood-making cells. I might feel tired and achy for a few days before the donation, but I should feel better a few days after.
- **Marrow donation:** Like other surgeries, I might be sore and tired after the hospital. I'll walk slowly and won't lift heavy things for a few days, but I'll be back to normal in a few weeks.

Q: Will your blood-making cells grow back?

- Yes, my blood-making cells will return to normal levels, just like when people donate blood.

Support

Q: How can I help?

- I might not feel well for a few days before or after the donation. It would be great if you could help with chores around the house while I'm getting better.