

Talking with your employer

If you're an employee and have decided to donate blood stem cells, it's important to inform your employer early on about the donation process. Discussing your needs and how they can support you will help manage the time commitment associated with donation and recovery. This may affect your work attendance. This guide provides answers to common questions your employer might have, along with talking points to help you communicate effectively.

Donation

Q: What is blood stem cell donation, and what are you being asked to do?

- Blood stem cell donation involves giving healthy blood-forming cells to replace a patient's unhealthy cells for those battling blood cancers or rare blood diseases. There are two methods of donation: peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) and bone marrow collection. The patient's doctor decides which method is best for the patient.
- **PBSC donation** is a nonsurgical procedure that takes place at a blood center or outpatient hospital facility.
 - The PBSC donation process is called apheresis and is similar to plasma donation, but it typically takes longer.
 - If I'm asked to donate PBSC, I will receive injections of medication for five consecutive days to increase the number of healthy cells in my body. During this time, I may experience symptoms like fatigue, headaches or body aches. My donation happens on the fifth day.
- **Marrow donation** is a same-day surgical outpatient procedure that takes place in a hospital operating room.
 - I will be under anesthesia while doctors withdraw marrow from my pelvic bone.

Q: How did you get selected to be a donor?

- I joined the NMDP RegistrySM. Every search through NMDPSM provides patients with access to more than 42 million potential donors in the world. Any of us could be identified as a match for a stranger in need of a transplant.
- The organization matches volunteer donors like me with thousands of patients with blood cancers like leukemia and lymphoma, sickle cell or other life-threatening diseases. A transplant can be the only treatment option that could save their life.

Q: Why is being a match for a patient so important?

- Seventy-five percent of patients who need a transplant don't have a fully matched donor in their family and turn to NMDP to find an unrelated donor. I may be the best match to help this patient.
- Matching a patient and donor is more complex than just matching blood types. It involves several factors, the most critical being the human leukocyte antigen (HLA) type. HLA are proteins—or markers—found on most cells in the body, and a close match is essential for a successful transplant.

Conversation tip: Share the excitement of your donation, but **share with care**. Patients trust you to keep their identity private. Do not share the exact date of donation. And do not share age, specific disease or gender of patient.

Conversation tip: Consider sharing with your direct supervisor where and why you joined the registry in the first place. This might help them understand your motivation for wanting to help someone you don't even know.

Time commitment

Q: Will you take PTO/vacation time for these appointments?

- The conversation about paid time off (PTO) versus leave without pay will vary for each donor based on your specific job, your direct supervisor and the policies of your organization.

Conversation tip: Before you discuss this topic with your direct supervisor, check your employee policy about leave for medical reasons. Some states have legislation requiring employers to give workers time off for donation without using sick time or vacation. To see donor leave statutes by state, visit: nmdp.org/StateStatutes

Q: Are you getting paid for donation?

- NMDP blood stem cell donors are volunteers. If I am asked to donate, I will not be compensated to help save someone I don't know.

Conversation tip: If your organization doesn't have a paid donor leave policy, your supervisor might ask you to take PTO or vacation time for appointments and the actual donation. If you don't have paid time off as part of your employment, your supervisor might expect you to take leave without pay. If this becomes a significant barrier to your donation, please contact your donor specialist to discuss resources that may be available to you.

Recovery and physical limitations

Q: How soon will you be able to return to work after donation?

- Recovery times for marrow and PBSC procedures are different, so it ultimately depends on what I'm asked to donate.
- If I donate PBSC, I should be able to return to work, school and any other activities in one to two days, depending on my job responsibilities.
- If I donate marrow, I should be able to return to work, school and any normal activities within one to seven days. If possible, it's recommended that I work a half day upon returning to work and increase my schedule as I am able. If my job involves physical labor or heavy lifting, more recovery time may be necessary.

Q: Are there any activities you should avoid when you return to work?

- If I donate PBSC, it is recommended that I:
 - Wait 24 hours before operating heavy machinery, climbing ladders or working from heights.
- If I donate marrow, it is recommended that I:
 - Avoid heavy lifting, bending or exercise, as well as lifting more than 10 lbs. during the first week.
 - Allow time between periods of heavy activity throughout the day during the first week.

About NMDP

Q: How can you be sure that NMDP is a legitimate organization?

- Founded in 1987, NMDP is a leader in cell therapy, helping find cures and save lives for patients with blood cancers and disorders.
- The U.S. Congress has entrusted NMDP to operate the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program, the federal program supporting the national blood and marrow registry of the United States.
- NMDP serves as the hub of a global transplant network. The organization's standards are designed to ensure that both patients and donors receive high-quality care and that all government requirements are met.

Conversation tip: Share [this video](#) with your employer to show them how you're now making dreams possible.

Q: Can I speak to someone at NMDP about your donation, or get formal documentation?

- Yes, I can authorize my donor specialist to speak with you. However, please understand that they will not be able to provide specific details about my case due to confidentiality. For more comprehensive information about the donation process and the time commitment required, visit nmdp.org.

Q: NMDP sounds great! How can our organization and employees get involved?

- There are many ways our organization and employees can get involved:
 - **Create a corporate fundraiser:** [Learn how to create](#) a custom fundraiser to help employees maximize their life-saving impact.
 - **Give a financial gift:** Learn how our organization can [support NMDP](#) through monetary contributions and workplace giving programs.
 - **Partner with NMDP:** Create a custom partnership that reflects your business and philanthropic goals.
 - **Share my story:** Help tell my donation story as a way to encourage others to join the NMDP Registry and show how our organization supports employees' personal causes.

Additional donor resources

- Visit nmdp.org/DonorToolkit and click on "Talking with your employer" for more resources. Contact your donor specialist if there's a specific resource you're unable to find.
- If your employer is interested in establishing a paid donor leave policy at your organization, contact your donor specialist for more information.