

What will the IBTS do with the information you give us?

The **IBTS** is committed to protecting the confidentiality of donors and their personal information. All our staff are trained in confidentiality, and personal information is kept secure. You can find out more by searching 'privacy' at www.giveblood.ie

Do you have any concerns around your sexual health after answering these questions?

We are working in partnership with sexual health professionals to promote greater awareness of how to manage your sexual health and wellbeing. If you would like information about sexual health/wellbeing or where you can get tested the following websites provide more information:

www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health

www.spunout.ie/sex-relationships/stis/sti-clinics-ireland

www.belongto.org/about-us

The new questions will be included in the giveblood.ie **'Can I give blood?'** eligibility quiz. We recommend that all donors, including regular donors, visit our website and take the eligibility quiz before attending to donate.

Thank you for working with us to bring about these changes. Together we can save lives.

T: +353 1 432 2800

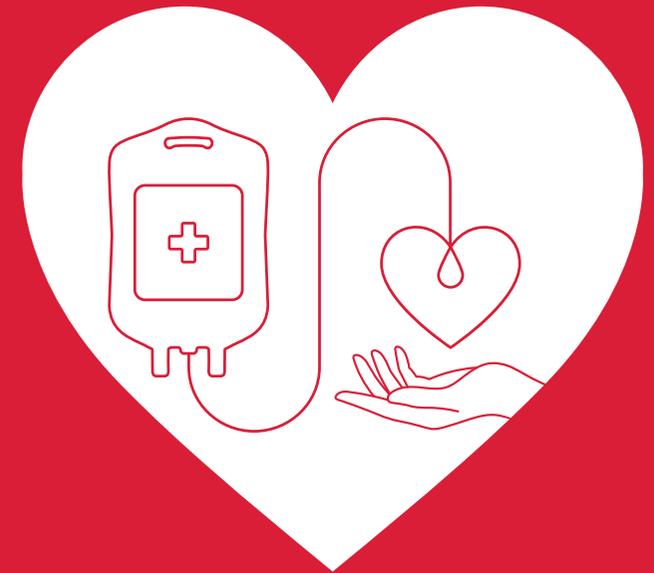
E: contactus@ibts.ie

W: www.giveblood.ie



**Irish Blood
Transfusion Service**

Seirbhís Fuilaidriúcháin na hÉireann



New Questions

to be asked of all donors from

28th November 2022

From 28th November 2022, the questions we ask before you give blood will change.

This is because the IBTS is starting to assess eligibility on a person-by-person basis, instead of applying across-the-board restrictions for sexual risk, which have previously excluded some potential donors.

Using a donor's individual experiences to determine if that person is eligible to donate makes the process fairer for all donors. It also means we will be asking every donor the same questions – regardless of the donor's gender or sexual orientation, or those of his/her partner.

These changes incorporate the key recommendations made by the Social Behaviours Review Group (SBRG) in 2021. The recommendations were designed to make blood donation more inclusive while maintaining the safety of the blood supply. Effective donor selection is at least as important as the tests we perform on every donation. Our tests are very reliable but there is a small risk that they could miss an infection in its early stages. This is called the Window Period, during which the donated blood will test negative, but is infectious and could transmit an infection to the patient who receives it.

This is why it is essential that you answer the questions honestly and accurately to the best of your knowledge.

You should never give blood if you think you or your partner is at risk of HIV or hepatitis. If you do, you risk infecting the patients who will receive your blood.

The SBRG identified several factors associated with a higher risk of blood-borne infection which include: taking part in Chemsex, having anal sex with a new partner or more than one partner and having a recent sexually transmitted infection (STI). Questions about these factors have been added to our donor health and lifestyle questionnaires.

Anal sex was identified as a higher risk activity than oral and vaginal sex. The risk of transmitting HIV and other STIs is at least 5 times higher by anal sex than by vaginal sex.

So what will these new questions be?

You will be asked whether over the past four months, you have:

- had sex with someone new, or resumed/restarted a previous sexual relationship
- had sex with more than one person

If you answer 'yes' to either (or both) questions, you will then be asked if you had anal sex with any of your sexual partners:

- if you have, you will not be eligible to donate for four months
- if you have not had anal sex, you will be able to donate (subject to other eligibility criteria)

We realise that being asked about specific sexual practices is something you may not be used to or may find uncomfortable. However, we hope you will understand the need for these questions. You will also be asked whether over the past four months, you have:

- taken part in chemsex. Chemsex is a type of sexual activity where people take certain drugs such as methamphetamine, mephedrone or GHB/GBL to enhance their sexual experiences, and let them have sex for longer or with more people. The use of alcohol, cannabis, Viagra or other medication for erectile dysfunction is not chemsex.

If you answer 'yes', you will not be eligible to give blood for four months after the last time you took part in chemsex. If you injected or were injected with Chemsex drugs, you cannot donate.

Existing Questions

We will continue to ask if you have ever had or been treated for syphilis or gonorrhoea.

If you answer 'yes' you cannot donate.

We will also ask whether over the past four months, you have:

- taken medication to prevent HIV infection i.e. Pre or Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP or PEP)
- been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection or had sex with someone who has a sexually transmitted infection (excluding genital herpes and genital warts)

If you have, you will not be eligible to donate for four months.

What will the changes mean for gbMSM?

The changes will mean that gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) who are in a monogamous relationship for 4 months or longer will be eligible to donate blood, even if they are having anal sex, as will their partners.

What will the changes mean for transgender donors?

These changes apply to all blood donors, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. Therefore, some transgender donors who were previously ineligible to donate blood will be able to do so, from 28th November 2022.

Who can I ask if I have further questions about my eligibility to donate?

You can call the donor helpline **1800 731 137** and ask to speak with a nurse or doctor in confidence. If you are on clinic you can ask to speak with a nurse, who will advise you.