

How to become a Donor

Becoming a potential bone marrow donor is not a difficult task. If you are between the ages of 17 and 59 and in good health, you can register as a bone marrow donor. Just visit the Canadian Blood Services web site, or call the Canadian Blood Services toll-free line 1-888-236-6283 and have an information package mailed to your home. You can read through the material at your leisure, and decide if you wish to become a donor. If you do, you send the completed package back to the Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry, and an appointment will be made for a quick blood test. After that, you will effectively be registered as a possible donor.

Should a patient's bone marrow type match yours you would be called and asked if you wish to go ahead to donate marrow.

Donating bone marrow is a fairly simple surgical procedure, and all of the details are explained to you long before you make your final decision to donate. The marrow is collected through a needle, from the pelvic area. The procedure takes about 30 - 90 minutes and is done under general anaesthetic, usually on an outpatient basis.

Then the donor's harvested bone marrow is transplanted into the patient, in a process similar to a blood transfusion.

The day after the procedure, the donor will feel a bit sore - as if they had fallen on the ice the night before. There will probably be a few bruises in the area where the marrow was collected. Depending on the individual, this usually only lasts a few days. Even though there is some physical discomfort, there is also a feeling of elation. It is not every day a person has the opportunity to give another human being a second chance at life!

Donating bone marrow may not be possible for many individuals. But you can still make an important contribution by donating blood. Bone marrow patients require large quantities of blood to provide them with the cells that their own bone marrow is not producing. Please contact your local Blood Donor Clinic to find out where you can give blood or call 1-888-236-6283.

WHAT IS A BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT

A Bone Marrow transplant is a life saving option in the treatment of many diseases of the blood. Marrow fills the inner cavity of many of our bones. It is vital because it produces, the red blood cells that carry oxygen, the white cells that fight infection, and the platelets that stop bleeding. Bone Marrow is regenerative, therefore a donor does not experience a loss of function in providing an individual with a "second" opportunity for a healthy life. The transplant is a medical procedure where the compatible marrow is harvested from a volunteer donor and given to a needy recipient.

Bone Marrow is the organ that makes our blood. If this "blood factory" within us begins to malfunction due to any one of several diseases, we are in great physical peril and may need a bone marrow transplant to survive. Sometimes the only compatible source for bone marrow is a total stranger. It could be someone from across town, across the country, or around the world. The Canadian Blood Services Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry is there to help find that one unselfish individual who could save a life.