

# Guide to Conversation with Your Employer

While making the decision to proceed for the donation, you'll want to involve and seek understanding from your support network – including your employer. It is important to inform your supervisor and employer as soon as you made your decision to donate to gain his/her full support and ensure flexibility in the schedule for appointments, the donation and recovery time.

When sharing about donation, listen and consider your employer's concerns to provide the best experience for both of you. The questions below are some commonly asked questions from employers to potential donors like you. You may use the information below to start a honest dialogue to help secure the work support you need during your life-saving journey.

## Donation Basics and Facts

### Q: What is it and what are you being asked to do?

- Marrow donation is a process of giving my healthy blood-forming cells to patients diagnosed with blood-related disease such as Leukaemia and Lymphoma to replace their unhealthy cells.
- There are two methods of donation: Peripheral Blood Stem Cell (PBCS) and Bone Marrow. I get to choose the method of donation.
- For PBCS donation, it is a nonsurgical procedure and normally performed in an outpatient setting in the hospital.
  - a) This procedure is similar to a plasma donation but typically takes longer, about 5-8 hours.
  - b) If I donate via PBCS method, I will be given injections daily, five days prior to the actual donation. I may experience flu-like symptoms during this period.
- For bone marrow donation, it is a surgical procedure and take place in a hospital operating room while I am under general anesthesia.
  - a) Liquid fluid marrow will be extracted from both sides of the pelvic bone and I will usually be discharged the following or subsequent day.

**Conversation tip:** Tell your direct supervisor specifically where and why you joined the registry in the first place. Share with them your motivation and how much it means to you. The best answer to this question is your personal encounter and motivation for donating.

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

- I joined the Bone Marrow Donor Programme (BMDP), Singapore only register of volunteer bone marrow donors. BMDP matched potential volunteer donors like me with patients diagnosed with blood-related disease such as Leukaemia, Lymphoma and Myeloma.
- For patient with these diseases, bone marrow transplant may be the best treatment option that could save their life.
- The organization matches volunteer donors like me with patients internationally and any one in the register may be identified as a match for a stranger patient in need of a transplant.

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

- The matching between donor and patient is more complex than matching blood types but most importantly, matching their human leukocyte antigen (HLA) type. These are proteins found on most cells in the body.

- Generally, patient needs a donor who is of a close genetic match based on their HLA, and therefore the urgent need to help find donors for patients who share the same ethnic background.

## Time Commitment

### Q: What is the time commitment and how the donation process affect your work schedule?

- I may have to take some time off from work that may spread out over several weeks including information session, appointments for physical examination and actual donation. All these stages are mandatory to ensure that the donation is safe for me and the patient. Below is an estimate of how much time I will take from work:

Stage 1: Information Session & Verification Typing – 1-2 hours

Stage 2: Donor Work-Up – 4-5 hours

Stage 3: Donation – 1-4 days (depending on types of donation)

Stage 4: Follow-Up – 1-2 hours

- Medical leave (MC) will be provided for all visits (Stage 2 and 4) to the hospital in preparation for the donation and post donation.
- Hospitalisation leave (HL) will provided for the donation (Stage 3).
- I can request for BMDP to provide a formal letter to our organization to inform the company about my participation in the programme.

### Q: Are all the appointment dates confirmed?

- Appointments leading up to the donation may change last minute as there may be changes to patient condition.
- If patient requires more treatment before the planned transplant date, the donation could be postponed. Alternatively, patient may seek other treatments if condition changes and my donation could be cancelled.

### Q: Where will you need to go for your appointments and the donation?

- All appointments and donation will be facilitated in collection centres in Singapore hospitals.

## Compensation

### Q: Are you getting paid for donation?

- BMDP is a volunteer programme and I will not be paid to donate to save patient's life.
- Travel expenses incurred will also be reimbursed.
- All expenses incurred will be covered by BMDP.

## Recovery and Physical Limitations

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

#### Conversation tip:

Share with your donor management representative about your schedule and they can help you draft a plan where you can share with your supervisor or employer to make better arrangements to put them at ease.

- Recovery period depends on which method I donate my marrow; PBSC or Bone Marrow
- If I donate via PBSC, I can go back to routine work within the one to two days post-donation.
- If I donate via bone marrow, I will be able to go back to routine work in a few days and full physical routine in a few weeks. However, I am advised not to involve physical labor or heavy lifting during the recovery period.

**Conversation tip:**

Brainstorm ways to cover your work projects or shifts while you are out. Your supervisor or employer likely will appreciate the consideration.

## Support

### Q: How can our organisation get involved with The Bone Marrow Donor Programme?

- Our organisation can help spread the word about donation for patient with blood-related diseases.
- BMDP always extend a warm welcome to organisation to become part of the life-saving cause by hosting recruitment drive within our organisation to encourage other individuals to join the registry.