

Guide to Conversation with Your Friends

When you make the decision to donate, your friends and other support groups are going to be extremely curious about your donation process. Be prepared to discuss facts and myths about the donation process and explain what the process really involves. After your explanation, your friends and other support groups may be eager to help and get involved – share with them about volunteering at The Bone Marrow Donor Programme. The questions below are some commonly asked questions from friends or other support groups to potential donors like you. You may use the information below to prepare a discussion to achieve the support you need during your life-saving journey!

Donation Basics and Facts

Q: Why did you join?

- 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.

Q: Why do you want to donate?

- I decide to join the registry and pledged to help save the life of any patient in need of bone marrow transplant. I can help give a patient a second chance at life and hopefully more time with their family.
- I made promise to patients and their families and I want to follow through with my commitment.
- 70% of patients do not find a match within their own family. They depend on unrelated donors like me. I would want someone to help us if we were in the same situation.
- Matching a patient is more complex than simply matching blood types. I could be the only person on the registry that can help this specific patient. Generally, patient needs a donor who is of a close genetic match based on their human leukocyte antigen (HLA). Therefore, the urgent need to help find donor who inherit these markers are someone more likely to share the same ethnic background as the patient.

Conversation tip: Tell your friends 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 does blood stem cell transplant work?

- Firstly, a patient who need a bone marrow transplant undergoes treatments to destroy their diseased bone marrow.
- Then, the donor's healthy blood-forming stem cells are given to the patient, where they can begin to function and multiply, replacing the patient's entire blood and immune system, giving them the second chance in life.

Q: What is involved in donation?

- There are **two methods of donation**: Peripheral Blood Stem Cell (PBSC) and Bone Marrow collection. I get to choose the method of donation.

- For PBSC donation (Method 1), it is a nonsurgical procedure and normally performed in an outpatient setting in the hospital and takes between 5-8 hours.
 - a) I will be given Granulocyte-Colony Stimulation Factor (G-CSF) injections for five days leading up to the donation. These injections help to increase the number of blood-forming cells in my blood stream.
 - b) On the fifth day of G-CSF injection, blood stem cells will be collected via the blood stream; two needle plucks are inserted, one at each arm, blood will pass through the machine which separates only the blood stem cells. Remaining blood components such as red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets will return from the other arm.
- For bone marrow collection (Method 2), it is a surgical procedure and take place in a hospital operating room for about 50minutes.
 - a) While under general anesthesia, liquid fluid marrow will be extracted from both sides of the pelvic bone. During the procedure, I will feel no discomfort. Upon observation, I will be discharged the following or subsequent day.
- For both methods, my body will naturally replace the donated stem cells within 4-6 weeks.

Time and Cost

Q: Do you get paid or do you pay for the donation?

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

Q: How much time commitment is required from you?

- Generally, the time commitment for the entire donation process is usually 20-30 hours spread out over several weeks for appointments such as physical examination and actual donation.

Support

Q: How can I get involved with The Bone Marrow Donor Programme?

- While you can spread the word about donation for patient with blood-related diseases, you can consider getting involved in the following manner:
 - Sign up as a bone marrow donor by joining the registry
 - Make a financial contribution
 - Join as an Ambassador to recruit donors within your community.
- Volunteer with us.

Conversation tip: Do get in touch with your donor management representative to find out more.