

PRESS RELEASE

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AIDS - AND BLOOD DONATION

The Department of Health and Social Security has today published a leaflet - "AIDS and how it concerns Blood Donors". It has been produced in co-operation with Regional Blood Transfusion Directors.

Announcing publication, Kenneth Clarke, Minister for Health said:
"It has been suggested that AIDS may be transmitted in blood or blood products. There is no conclusive proof that this is so. Nevertheless I can well appreciate the concern that this suggestion may cause. We must continue to minimise any possible risk of transmission of the disease by blood donation but it is not possible to test a person's blood for the presence of AIDS. The best measure which can be taken at the present time is to ask people who think they may have AIDS or be at risk from it, to refrain from giving blood. This is what this leaflet sets out to do."

The Council of Europe has recommended that all member states should make information on AIDS available to blood donors. There is no question of donors being asked about their sexual lives at blood donation sessions or at any other time.

NOTE TO EDITORS

Half the Factor VIII used for the treatment of haemophilia in this country is produced here and the remainder imported from the USA. The US Food and Drug Administration have introduced special requirements for plasma collection which are designed to exclude donors from high risk groups from plasma donation. The Government is committed to making Britain self-sufficient in blood products - the National Blood Transfusion Service already meets demands for whole blood - and is redeveloping the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree over the next 3 years.