

Remember,
AIDS
is a serious disease

Please do not give blood:

- If you are a man who has had sex with another man.
- If you are a drug abuser who has injected drugs.
- If you are a haemophiliac who has received unheated blood products.
- If you have lived in or visited Africa and have had sex with men **or** women living there.
- If you are a sexual contact of any of these people.

Anyone can discuss in confidence the information in this leaflet:

- with a doctor at the blood collection session
- with their own doctor
- with a doctor from their blood transfusion centre
- at any sexually transmitted diseases (STD) clinic

A general booklet called **AIDS - What Everyone Needs to Know** is available free from Dept A, PO Box 100, Millers Hayes MK4 1DU. Up-to-date recorded information on AIDS is available on the Healthline Telephone Service 01-981 2717 or 01-900 7222. If you are phoning from outside London you can phone 0845 501151 on local rates.

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AIDS

What you
must know
before you
give blood

THE NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by a virus which attacks the body's natural resistance to infections and other illnesses.

How is it spread?

The virus is spread mainly by sexual contact with an infected person, but it can also be passed on through blood. Most people who carry the virus do not even know they have been infected. But anyone who does have the virus can pass it on, even if they feel and look completely well. So it is important that anyone who may have been exposed to the virus should not give blood.

Is blood tested?

Donors are tested for anaemia before giving blood. Other tests are done on donated blood afterwards in the laboratory. These include a test for antibodies in the blood, which would indicate that a person has been exposed to the AIDS virus. The test is to find anyone who may have been infected without knowing. Donors are asked to agree to this test.

Although all blood donations are tested for antibodies to the AIDS virus, the test may not pick up early cases of infection. That is why people who may have been exposed to the virus - see the list opposite - must not go to donor sessions, even if they later receive another call-up card. The Blood Transfusion Service will not ask people why they do not go.

In the very unlikely event of a positive reaction to any of the laboratory tests, a donor is informed by a doctor from the blood transfusion centre so that extra confirmatory tests can be arranged. A donor's medical history is always kept in the strictest confidence.

Can donors get AIDS by giving blood?

Absolutely not. All the materials used for collecting blood are sterile and used only once. Neither AIDS nor any other disease can be caught from giving blood.

People who must not give blood

These are the people who are most likely to have been exposed to the AIDS virus. They must **not** give blood:

-  Men who have had sex with another man at any time since 1978.
-  Drug abusers, both men and women, who have injected drugs at any time since 1978.
-  Haemophiliacs who have received unheated blood products at any time since 1978.
-  People who have lived in or visited Africa south of the Sahara at any time since 1978 and have had sex with men **or women** living there.
-  Sexual partners of people in these groups. This includes single contacts as well as regular relationships.

People who think they may have been exposed to the AIDS virus can get a blood test, in strict confidence, either through their own doctor or at a sexually transmitted diseases (STD) clinic. Clinics can be found in the phone book under 'venereal disease' or 'sexually transmitted disease'. People whose test is negative should still not give blood.