

Important Information

for Parents, School Health Providers and Faculty

Congratulations on becoming a life-saving partner by helping to ensure an adequate and safe blood supply for our community. Young, healthy donors are an integral part of the success of donor programs throughout the U.S. and our area is no exception. Of course, our main concern is that our young donors are well-cared for and that they will have a positive experience. It is our hope that these first donations will instill, in each of them, loyalty and a sense of community pride that comes with saving lives. Your help in achieving the goal of a safe and fun high school blood donor program is integral. Here are some important facts to help you assist in supporting a successful donation experience for young donors.

- Each student should have eaten something substantial prior to donating. It is best for them to have eaten 1 to 1 ½ hours before donating. Having a Pop Tart for breakfast at 7 a.m. and nothing else before donating at 12:30 p.m. is not a good idea. Some schools have PB&J stations to serve peanut butter and jelly sandwiches the morning of the blood drive.
 - Students should also drink extra fluids prior to and after donating. Although being hydrated is important, recent research notes that providing 8 to 12 ounces of room temperature water to students just prior to donation (after temperature and finger-stick) gives an added bonus of providing Positive Gastric Distention which, in short, is putting a little extra pressure on the gut to raise blood pressure enough to keep most students from feeling “light-headed” from the fluid loss of a pint of whole blood or packed red cells. In an effort to reduce the incidence of reactions in young donors, a “hydration station” is provided as a routine part of a high school blood drive.
 - **One important thing to remember is that most reactions are caused by extreme nervousness.** These vasovagal reactions can usually be avoided if the student remains calm and focuses on slow, rhythmic breathing. Although our staff is trained to recognize the signs of an impending reaction (light headedness, yawning or becoming hot and sweating), students should be advised to let the staff know immediately if they feel different so precautions can be taken (head lowered and legs elevated, ice pack, distraction).
 - Although it can be very scary, it is important to realize that, according to workplace first aid curriculum, “. . . fainting is usually a self-correcting condition. When the person collapses, normal circulation to the brain resumes.” (From ARC first aid course curriculum.) As long as the person recovers quickly and has no lasting signals, it should not be necessary to call EMS. Collections staff members are trained in first aid and will recognize conditions in which additional care would be necessary (prolonged loss of consciousness or prolonged vomiting). If either of these situations occurs, school officials or a parent will be notified.
 - Donors should arise from the donor bed slowly and sit on the side of the bed until vascular volume stabilizes. Then, each donor should remain in the refreshment area at least 10 to 15 minutes, relaxing and enjoying refreshments. **If the student begins to feel light-headed or dizzy after leaving the donation area, he or she should sit or lie on the floor to avoid falling and send someone for help. If collections staff is still in the facility, they will come to the aid of the student.** Again, first aid measures include lowering the head and elevating the legs and feet to improve venous return. The donor should be encouraged to breath deeply (inhaling through the nose/exhaling through the mouth) to improve oxygenation. The student needs to lie quietly for a while after a brief fainting or near-fainting episode. They will usually feel better soon after resting and drinking more fluids.
 - All donors should heed instructions to “make your next meal a good one” and to “drink plenty of fluids for the next several hours.”
 - Normal activity need not be routinely restricted, but strenuous exercise and heavy lifting should be avoided for several hours. If the student feels tired or has experienced a fainting episode, though, encourage them to “take it easy” until they feel restored.
 - Bruising can result when blood accumulates beneath the skin. To minimize this, donors are instructed to “hold pressure” on the site. The best way to do this is to put the thumb under the elbow and hold the gauze firmly with three fingers, while lifting the arm straight up as if to answer a question in school. The pressure bandage applied immediately after donation should be left on for at least two hours. Most painless bruising should not be a cause for great concern. If the bruise is not causing pain and it is soft, it will begin to spread and turn different colors as the capillaries beneath the skin begin to absorb the blood that has accumulated. *If the bruise is painful or if a hard knot develops, please call the blood center for follow-up instructions.*
 - If the parent, student or faculty becomes concerned about any post-donation experience, they should call the blood center (Monday through Friday) and speak with a nurse to discuss their concerns and to obtain further instructions if needed.
 - **Blood Center personnel will follow-up with a phone call to any student who has experienced a reaction, no matter how mild. This gives the student (or parent) a chance to discuss any concerns that may have developed. If we cannot reach the student or a parent (usually the next day), a letter will be sent to inquire about recovery.**
- Donating blood is a safe way for students to make a positive difference in our community. Hopefully, any initial feelings of fear or nervousness will be overcome and replaced with the emotional reward of knowing that their blood has saved another’s life.

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