

Autologous Blood Donation: Information for Patients and Families

What is autologous blood donation?

Autologous blood donation is when a patient donates blood that they will use for their own procedure. The blood is safely stored until it is ready for them to use. Autologous donation is often used for patients with rare blood types or for patients who choose to bank their own blood for personal reasons.

What do I need to know about autologous blood donation?

Autologous blood donation is an option for patients, not a requirement.

We hope the information in this handout will help you decide if you want to donate your own blood.

The blood supply is safer than it has ever been.

- Any blood transfusion, including autologous blood donations, may cause some small side effects, including chills, fever, or hives (a skin rash). More serious reactions can also occur, but they are very rare.
- Improved blood donor screening and blood testing procedures have significantly reduced the risk of someone getting infected with a disease (like hepatitis or HIV) from the blood supply. Right now, the nation's blood supply is safer than it has ever been.

Autologous blood donation still involves some risk for the donor (patient).

- Some patients may have low red blood cell counts, or their body may not be able to replace the blood they donate in time for their surgery. In these cases, the risk of autologous blood donation is likely higher than the

benefit.

- Patients who take antibiotics, have infections, or feel sick should not donate blood (except in rare cases). Your primary doctor or the doctor doing your procedure can help you decide if autologous blood donation before your procedure is safe.

Autologous blood donation is not always possible for everyone.

- Autologous blood donors must have veins that are large enough for the needle used to collect the blood. They must be generally in good health and have enough red blood cells, with a hematocrit (measure of red blood cells) of 33% or higher. Donors must be able to fully extend their arms, and they must be willing and able to keep still and follow instructions while donating blood.
- Many people do not tolerate donating more than 1 or 2 units of blood within several weeks, and they may feel sick after donating. Some patients need to take an iron supplement to help rebuild their red blood cells.

Autologous blood is not collected at Michigan Medicine.

Blood collection agencies, such as the American Red Cross, collect autologous blood for our patients and ship it directly to the Michigan Medicine Blood Bank. They will label it specifically for the donor patient who plans to use it.

Autologous blood can only be used for a short period of time.

Autologous blood must be used within 35-42 days of collection. Autologous blood donors must plan to wait at least 10 days between their last blood donation and when they plan to use the collected blood. This waiting period allows the blood collection agency enough time to prepare and ship the blood to the hospital.

Collecting autologous blood is costly.

- Because autologous blood requires special handling, shipping, and processing, there are more costs involved with using your own blood for your procedure. Most insurance companies do not cover these extra costs.
- Blood collection agencies other than the American Red Cross may charge extra fees for shipping. These fees are non-refundable.
- **Patients will be charged for each autologous blood collection, even if they end up not using the blood for any reason.**

How do I plan for autologous blood donation?

- **Time your donation** so the blood does not expire by the date of your procedure. You also need to allow enough time between the donation and the procedure for you to fully recover.
- **Contact your doctor** to find out how much blood you may need. Ask your doctor to complete the American Red Cross Special Collection Order form, which you can get by e-mailing **SpecialCollections@RedCross.org**. If you're using a different blood collection agency, your doctor will need to reach out to them to get an order form.
- **Send the collection order forms directly to the blood collection agency.** The Michigan Medicine Blood Bank does not need a copy of these forms, and we do not handle the blood collection. You should schedule autologous blood donations directly with the blood collection center.

Please talk with your doctor if you have other questions about autologous blood donation.

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