

# Directed Blood Donation: Information for Patients and Families

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## **What is directed blood donation?**

**Directed blood donation** is when a patient who needs a blood transfusion (now, or for a future procedure) selects their own blood donors. This may be for personal reasons or because they have a rare blood type.

## **What do I need to know about directed blood donation?**

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

Another option to help boost the blood supply for all is to donate blood to the general blood supply. Family or friends of the patient can volunteer to donate through the American Red Cross or another blood collection agency.

**Directed donor blood is not collected at Michigan Medicine.**

Blood collection agencies, such as the American Red Cross, collect directed blood for our patients. After testing the donation for infections, it is shipped directly to the Michigan Medicine Blood Bank.

**Directed donor blood is not safer than blood collected from community volunteer donors.**

All donors, including directed blood donors, are interviewed and tested for infectious diseases (disease that can pass from one person to another). Blood from directed donors has the same risk of causing reactions (such as fevers or hives) or infecting someone with a disease as blood from the community volunteer blood supply. Patients sometimes feel safer selecting their own donors, but it is not a guarantee of safety and it is not medically better.

**Directed donor blood cannot be collected in an emergency.**

Testing, processing, and shipping directed donor blood takes at least 10-14 days after donation.

**Directed donor blood can only be used for a short period of time.**

Directed donor blood must be used within 35-42 days of collection. Some patients, such as babies younger than 4 months, need blood that is less than 10 days old.

**Collecting directed donor blood is costly.**

- Because blood from directed donors requires special handling, shipping, and processing, there are more costs involved with using directed donor blood. 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 directed donor blood unit, even if they end up not using it for any reason.**

**We will not use directed donor blood units that are unsafe for a patient.**

We will not use a directed donor blood unit for the intended patient if we find there are issues with it. This could include incompatibility (the donor blood type does not match the patient's), damage to the blood bag, tests showing the blood contains infectious disease, poor storage conditions for the blood unit, or other reasons.

**Once we receive it, the directed donor blood unit becomes the property of Michigan Medicine.**

If there is a national or local disaster or a life-threatening patient care need, we may use directed donor blood for other patients.

## How do I plan for directed blood donation?

- **Contact your doctor** to find out how much blood you may need. If you are using the American Red Cross for collection, ask the doctor to complete the American Red Cross Special Collection form and the Donor and Patient Risk Acknowledgement for Directed Donation form, which you can get by e-mailing [SpecialCollections@RedCross.org](mailto:SpecialCollections@RedCross.org).
- **Send the completed 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 directed blood donations directly with the blood collection center.
- **Know your blood type and the blood types of your donors.**
  - Your doctor may have your blood type information in your medical records. If not, they can order a blood type test.
  - Your donors may have a blood type test drawn by their own doctors, request a blood type test directly from a non-Michigan Medicine commercial laboratory, present a valid blood donor card with their blood type printed on it to your doctor, or present records from blood typing they've done before to your doctor. Your doctor can decide if the directed donors are a match for your blood type.
  - If your donors are unable to have a blood type test, they may schedule a directed donation without knowing their blood type. The blood collection agency will perform a blood type test afterward. If your directed donor's blood type is not a match for you, the donor blood will not be used for you. You will, however, be responsible for the cost of collecting the blood.
- **Choose one person – it could be you (the patient), a family member, or a friend – to be the directed donor coordinator.** The coordinator works

with the blood collection agency and selected donors to plan and organize the blood collection process.

- When donors call the blood collection agency to make appointments, they will need to provide the patient's name, Michigan Medicine medical record number (MRN), and birth date. The agency will also ask the donor to give their name, birth date, relationship to the patient, and weight (as the minimum weight to donate blood is at least 110 pounds).

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

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