

# Understand Your Commitment



Bone marrow is the squishy center of the larger bones of your body. Bone marrow makes the cells of your immune system. When someone is diagnosed with blood cancer (leukemia or lymphoma) or another disease caused by nonfunctional immune cells, that person can be treated – even saved – with a transplant of functional marrow or peripheral blood stem cells (PSBC).

The functional cells come from a donor – a healthy person willing to provide them and matched to the patient. What makes the donor match a patient? Human leukocyte antigen (HLA) type, basically proteins expressed on the body cells.

Some lucky patients find a matching donor within their family – but most patients do not. The unlucky patients must find an anonymous volunteer donor.

Our organization educates military and Department of Defense employees about becoming volunteer donors, and helps them through the process of donation. When you elect to be a donor through our program, you are making a promise to help someone at a future date. Not just one person, but any person who needs you and is well-matched.

Joining the registry is the easy part: You complete a consent form and provide some cheek swabs. For most people, this is all that you will ever be asked to do; the vast majority of registered donors are never called as a match. However, a small number will be called and it is very important that every single one of them understand the seriousness of their commitment.

If you are found to be a match: We will make every effort to find you quickly. You will receive messages, phone calls, and letters – at home, at work, at your parents' or friends' homes. You will be asked to provide blood samples and a lot of health information. We will send you for a full physical exam. If everything goes as planned, you will donate within a few weeks or months of being contacted

Donation takes place by one of two methods:

- 1) Traditional marrow donation. You go to a hospital, be anaesthetized, and have some of your marrow cells removed from your hip bone using a large needle.
- 2) PSBC donation. You get five days of shots of a drug that causes your bones to release some of these cells into your blood. On the fifth day, you spend several hours with an apheresis machine – which takes blood from one arm, separates out some of the cells, and returns the rest of the blood to the other arm. Both options have risks and benefits – but you should recover fully from either in about two weeks.



Donation is not for everyone.

- It takes about 30 hours spread over several weeks.
- You will need to provide multiple blood samples.
- You will not be paid (though all of your expenses are covered by the program).
- While we can help arrange time off from work, we cannot pay you for your lost wages.



Just joining the registry is a major commitment: Once your swab samples are typed, you will remain on the list of potential donors until you reach age 61 or ask to be removed.

Please do not join this registry if you are unable to wholeheartedly commit to these challenges. It is crushing to a patient to learn that potential donors are unwilling to proceed. **Do not provide false hope.**