



Stem Cell Donors
Australia

**What happens
after I donate?**






Focusing on your recovery is important after you've donated bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC).

This factsheet outlines what to expect during your post-donation recovery and the follow-up schedule designed to ensure your health and well-being.

1. Post-donation recovery





- a. Rest and monitoring.** After the donation, you'll be monitored at the collection centre for a few hours to ensure you recover from the procedure. No two people are the same after donating. The main thing is to rest and take it easy. If you've got any questions, please call your Donor Support Coordinator.
- b. Hydration and nutrition.** Staying hydrated and eating regular, balanced meals after donation will support your recovery. Listening to your body is essential—rest when needed and avoiding strenuous activities for a few days.
- c. Monitoring your symptoms.** You may continue to feel some fatigue or mild pain in the days following your donation, but most donors can return to normal activities within a week. If you notice any unusual symptoms, such as excessive pain, swelling, or signs of infection, contact your healthcare provider immediately.
- d. Pain Management.**
- **PBSC donation.** Most donors feel fine after donating blood stem cells, but one or more of the following symptoms are common:

The symptom	What you can do
 Mild flu-like symptoms, such as headache, muscle and bone pain	Paracetamol should help ease these symptoms
 Bruising	This usually occurs around the needle sites and should disappear within a few days
 Feeling Tired	Rest and avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours after donating

- **Bone marrow donation.** After the procedure, you may feel sore and have some colourful bruising and stiffness in your lower back region. Most donors recover well and are back to their regular routine within days. However, some may take two to three weeks before feeling fully recovered.

While serious complications are very rare, it's still important you monitor for any signs of excessive bruising or swelling, infection, or reactions to anaesthetic medications.

Side effects can vary, but here are the most common:

The symptom	What you can do
 Back or hip pain	Paracetamol should help ease these symptoms
 Stiffness and soreness	This usually occurs around the needle sites and should disappear within a few days
 Fatigue	Rest and avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours after
 Colourful bruising around the back of the hips and below	This should subside within a week or two after donation

2. Follow Up

Naturally, we want to keep in touch after such a procedure and see how you are. You will be contacted for your first follow-up within 72 hours of your collection.

Regardless of the donation method, your Donor Support Coordinator will follow up with you weekly until you can resume regular activity. We will contact you annually for up to ten years to check your general condition.

- **24 to 72 hours post-donation.** The Donor Support Team will contact you and ask you to answer a short questionnaire with some simple questions about your well-being. Put your feet up and relax if you can. If you are experiencing any symptoms, please read the symptoms above to learn how best to manage them.
- **Three months.** Around this time, we will call or email asking you to book an appointment with your GP. You will be required to have a blood sample taken so that we can check your blood counts and make sure you've bounced back. The results will be sent to us to check that your bloods are in the normal range.
- **One to three weeks post-donation.** A few days post-donation, we will give you a call to see how you feel — your well-being post-donation matters to us. We want to ensure you are well supported, even once you donate. You can also share your experience with friends and family on social media.
- **Annually.** For ten years post-donation, we will contact you annually to see how you are doing and ensure we can continue reassuring future donors about the long-term safety of donation. For the first few years, you'll be asked to fill in a short questionnaire.

The possibility of subsequent donations: donating mononuclear cells, Apheresis

In 15% of cases, a recipient may need your infusion of white blood cells (lymphocytes). This is commonly known as a donor lymphocyte infusion (DLI), but the technical name for the product is Mononuclear cells, Apheresis [MNC(A)]. A recipient usually needs this donation to help boost their recovery. This type of donation can be requested within months of your initial donation or even several years later. You will attend the same hospital as your previous donation and

undergo the same medical assessment process to ensure you are still fit to donate. Preparation for this is more straightforward than for PBSC, and doesn't require any injections. You'll sit in a comfy chair where the white blood cells will be removed, via apheresis, from your blood. It can take approximately four to five hours, usually at the collection centre where you originally donated. Most donors can return to work the next day.

