



**Stem Cell Donors**  
Australia

**How will  
donating blood  
stem cells  
impact me?**



**Preparing to donate blood stem cells and recovering from donation day can have side effects for some donors.**

No two donors are the same —some go through with donation and don't have any side effects, while others have mild to moderate side effects. The good news is that the side effects are usually temporary and can be easily managed with paracetamol.



## Preparing to donate by PBSC

If you donate by PBSC (requested 90% of the time), you'll need to take a short course of injections over four days before you donate, known as granulocyte colony-stimulating factor or G-CSF. It's a synthetic version of a naturally occurring protein that is used to boost white blood cells in cancer patients to help fight infection. For stem cell donors, it also has the valuable side-benefit of pushing blood stem cells out of the bone marrow – usually the only place they can be found – into your bloodstream. This makes it possible to remove the stem cells using an apheresis (cell separator) machine on donation day.

For those who experience side effects, it can usually be felt from the third day of injections. Paracetamol and rest can easily manage these symptoms (the silver lining is you can catch up on your favourite movie or book!) It's best to avoid highly strenuous activity during this period, which means you get a well-deserved break from the gym. For those who feel the effects of G-CSF, these symptoms usually wear off once the donation starts.

[Learn more about G-CSF.](#)

While taking G-CSF, some donors can experience:

- Body aches
- Bone pain
- Headaches
- Fatigue/tiredness

## Recovering from a PBSC procedure

It's normal to feel worn out after donating blood stem cells via PBSC. It typically takes a day to a few days to feel back to your usual self. Not all donors have symptoms, but you could experience:

Symptoms	Tips to help alleviate them
 <b>Mild flu-like symptoms, such as headache, muscle and bone pain</b>	Take paracetamol to help ease symptoms.
 <b>Bruising at the needle site</b>	Bruising should disappear within a few days.
 <b>Feeling tired</b>	Rest and avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours after donating.

## Recovering from a bone marrow donation

There is very little to prepare for if you undergo a bone marrow donation. Usually, the main requirement is to fast (no eating or drinking) a few hours before the procedure. Most donors recover quickly and return to their regular routine within a few days to a week. For some donors, it can take an extra week or two before feeling fully recovered. This is because it takes time for your body to return to its original bone marrow levels.

Side effects can vary, with the most common being:

Symptoms	Tips to help alleviate them
 <b>Back or hip pain</b>	Take paracetamol to help ease symptoms.
 <b>Stiffness and soreness around hips</b>	Usually, it disappears within a few days.
 <b>Feeling tired</b>	Rest and avoid strenuous activity until you feel back to your usual self.
 <b>Colourful bruising around the back of the hips and below</b>	Usually, it subsides within a week or two after donation.

## Additional resources



**VIDEO**

Learn more about the impacts of donating blood stem cells



**VIDEO**

Is bone marrow donation painful?



**ARTICLE**

Stewart's story: donating bone marrow



**ARTICLE**

Courtney's PBSC story: I was back at work the next day