

BLOOD DONOR EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL **IRON INFORMATION FOR FREQUENT AND SUSCEPTIBLE DONORS**

Iron and Blood Donation

Donating a unit of whole blood, double red blood cells, or platelets removes iron from your body. You need iron to make new red blood cells. Iron deficiency may affect your health.

Am I a frequent blood donor or do I fall into a susceptible group?

A Frequent Blood Donor is defined as:

- ♥ Males donating three or more red blood cell units within a 12-month period or five or more platelet pheresis donations in an 8-week period.
- ♥ Females donating two or more red blood cell units within a 12-month period or five or more platelet pheresis donations in an 8-week period.

Susceptible groups are:

- ♥ Young Donors: Age 16-18
- ♥ Premenopausal females
- ♥ Donors with hematocrit values near the minimum eligibility (e.g. Males with hematocrits between 39% and 40.5% and females with hematocrits between 38% and 39%).

If I could give blood today, does that mean that I have enough iron?

Prior to donating, CBB tests for your hematocrit level. The **hematocrit** test indicates the percentage of blood by volume that is composed of red blood cells. It does not measure the level of iron in your body. Even if you qualify for blood donation, you may have low iron reserves.

What are some of the symptoms of iron deficiency?

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Pale skin
- Chest pain, fast heartbeat or shortness of breath
- Headache, dizziness or lightheadedness
- Cold hands and feet
- Inflammation or soreness of your tongue
- Brittle nails
- Unusual cravings for non-nutritive substances, such as ice, chalk, dirt or starch
- Poor appetite

Should frequent and susceptible blood donors replace the iron they lose with each blood donation?

Community Blood Bank recommends that frequent and susceptible blood donors should consider taking a multi-vitamin containing iron or an iron-only supplement to replace the iron lost with each donation. You should **discuss taking these measures with your health-care provider** before adding it to your routine. Iron supplements may be harmful in some individuals or mask conditions associated with gastrointestinal blood loss, donors with a personal or family history of hereditary hemochromatosis, familial polyposis, or colorectal cancer.

What are the typical benefits to iron supplementation?

- Prevents significant iron depletion
- More energy
- Quicker recovery of iron stores.
- Maintaining healthy iron levels will allow donors to safely continue donating thereby ensuring a robust blood supply for patients in need.

Where can I get iron supplements?

Iron is available as an over the counter medicine at drug stores, health food stores and grocery stores without a prescription as well as through the internet. Prices and doses vary greatly.

How much iron should I take?

Recommendation:

- **CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER BEFORE COMMENCING IRON SUPPLEMENTATION.**
- **CONSULT WITH YOUR HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER OR PHARMACIST ABOUT THE EFFECT OF IRON SUPPLEMENTATION ON ABSORPTION OF OTHER MEDICATIONS.**