

# iTRANSFUSEFACTSHEET

all about blood

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## I NEED TO KNOW IF PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD CANCER CAN STILL DONATE BLOOD?

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### Can you still donate blood if you have had cancer?

Yes, many people with a past history of cancer are able to donate blood.

The current *Guidelines for the Selection of Blood Donors* (GSBD) 2010 state that blood can be donated by a person who has not required treatment for cancer for five years and has had no evidence of relapse.

### Are there any exceptions?

“Haematological” (blood) cancers like leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma currently result in a permanent deferral.

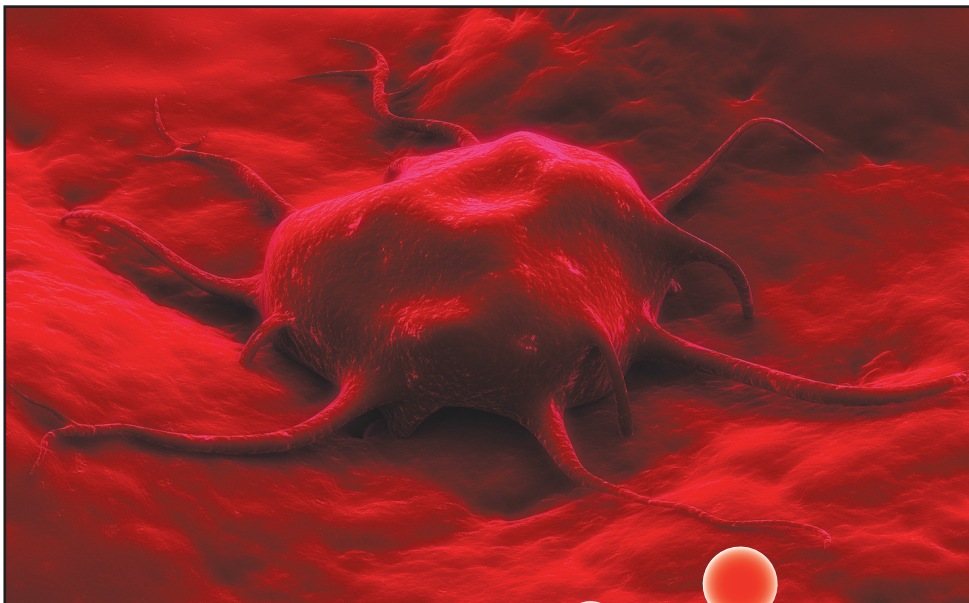
On the other hand, there is no deferral at all for pre-malignant conditions that are not cancerous but that may develop into cancer, such as solar keratoses of the skin (spots which may be a precursor to skin cancer). Also, very superficial types of cancer like minor skin cancers only exclude donors until they have been treated.

### Why might the Blood Service need blood from donors with a past history of cancer?

Blood services around the world face increasing challenges with recruiting voluntary blood donors, particularly with the current trend of an ageing population. If people are ‘cured’ of cancer and would like to donate, there is no evidence that this is a problem for either the donor or the recipient.

### How do we know that cancer can't be spread from a blood donor to a recipient?

There are no convincing reports to show that cancer can be transmitted by blood transfusion after nearly a century of blood banking.



In particular, the largest study to date on this issue showed no difference in the risk of cancer between patients receiving blood from donors with cancer and patients receiving blood from donors without cancer.

### What if a donor finds out they have cancer after donating blood?

The donor should notify the Blood Service so that we know to stop calling them for at least five years. Depending upon the type of cancer, we may take the precaution of recalling some components of previous donations. In most cases no recall is required.

### Would giving blood with undiagnosed cancer make the cancer worse?

There is no evidence that donating blood either increases the risk of getting cancer, or worsens the outcome for any existing undiagnosed cancer.

### PACK FACT

Before there were rules about conducting appropriate studies, a researcher in the 1940s tried to give terminally ill patients leukaemia by giving them blood from leukaemia patients. He did not succeed.

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