

Talking with your children

You may not think it's important to talk with your children about your decision to donate, but it's actually a good opportunity to educate them about helping others. Your children, no matter what age, will have a lot of questions about donation and the person you are helping. Do your best to respond to their questions with simple answers they can understand. Offer them many opportunities to talk about their thoughts and feelings on the topic. The questions below are some of the most commonly asked questions from children of potential donors like you. Use the information below to prepare yourself for your conversation.

Donation basics

Q: Why do you have to go to the doctor? Are you sick?

- No, I'm not sick. I'm helping someone who is really sick so they might get better.
- Someone's blood-making cells aren't working right and they need new ones. A doctor is going to help me give some of my blood-making cells to them and my body will make new ones.
- It's nothing to be afraid of—I've been given the opportunity to do something good for someone who really needs help. There are a lot of opportunities to do good things for people. Can you think of some ways you can help other people?

Q: Who are you helping? Why are they sick?

- I signed-up to help anyone who needs new blood-making cells. Someone got sick and their doctor is checking to see if I am the best person to help them.
- I don't know why they are sick. Nobody knows why some people get sick and others don't. The important thing is to help those that are sick to get better.

Conversation tip: It's ok to tell your children the information you know about the patient like their age or gender. They may also be curious to learn more about the patient's disease or the transplant process.

Q: Can I give my blood-making cells to help someone?

- Children: You have to be 18 years old to donate. When you're 18, you can decide if you want to sign-up to be a donor.
- Teens: You need to be 18 to donate because you must legally be able to decide for yourself. When you turn 18, if you would like to register, I would love to help you with that information.

Time and Cost

Q: Why do you need to go away? Can I come with?

- There are only certain clinics and hospitals that are experienced in donation. I need to go to one of those places so that I am taken care of really well.
- This trip is so that I can give someone something that they need so they can get better. Once I have donated, I'll be on my way back home. I can have one person go with me and that person needs to be an adult.

Conversation tip: If you are interested in having your child(ren) go with you to the donation, check with your donor center representative regarding guidelines and recommendations on this topic.

Health concerns

Q: What do you mean you will feel sick for a while? When are you going to feel better?

- PBSC donation: My doctor is going to give me shots so I can make a lot more blood-making cells for the patient. These shots are going to make me feel like I have the flu. I might be tired and achy for a few days before donating, but will feel better a few days after the donation.
- Marrow donation: Just like lots of other surgeries, I might be sore and tired after I come home from the hospital. I'll be walking pretty slowly for a few days and won't be able to lift some things, but I'll be back to normal in a few weeks.

Q: Will your blood-making cells grow back?

- Yes, my blood-making cells will return to normal levels, just like when people donate blood for other people.

Support

Q: How can I help?

- I may not feel well for a few days before or after I donate. It would be very nice of you if you could help me with chores around the house while I'm getting better.