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Expert Column

# Does donating blood pose a risk?

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In Malaysia, the rate of blood donation has ranged from 19.7-22.5 per 1000 population since 2020 until 2022. By 2030, we are targeting to

achieve 35 to 40 donors per 1000 population to meet our supply (1). In other words, we still need more brave hearts to come forward and donate. Donating blood is most noble act and blood is the most precious gift you can give to others. Are you a blood donor or intend to donate blood? However, are you worried about the adverse reaction? Have you heard or experienced dizziness or swelling in the arm post-donation? Although adverse donation reaction incidents are low there are ways to minimise this reaction.

Multiple screening will be done before selecting donors who are fit to donate. It starts with a pre-donation questionnaire, checking donor weight (minimum 45kg for whole blood donation or 55kg for apheresis), followed by haemoglobin (minimum of 12.5g/dl for females and 13.5g/dl for male), blood pressure checking, and pre-donation counselling by trained medical professionals (2). As a donor, what can be done to be positive about donating blood? Today we are here to share some tips for donors.

***As a donor, how should I prepare myself before donating to have a good blood donation experience?***

There is no need to fast before donating blood. (3)

- The donor needs to eat healthy food for at least 4 hours before donating blood. This is to reduce the risk of adverse events during the donation (3)
- Donors are advised to avoid fatty foods before donating, as they interfere with plasma collection. (4)
- Donors are advised to drink plenty of water before and during donation to replenish fluid loss (3)
- Avoid alcoholic beverage for at least 24 hours before donating.
- Donors are also advised to take meat and green leafy vegetables to optimized haemoglobin levels.
- The donor needs at least 5 hours of sleep before donating blood. (3)
- Donors should dress comfortably and with sleeves that can be rolled up above the elbow. (4)

***I have successfully donated. Is there anything else I need to know or do after donating blood? Yes, here are some points that will be very helpful to donors post-donation.***

- Rest for at least 10 minutes at the blood bank or blood donation area after the donation to monitor any adverse events.
- Compress the venepuncture site with gauze to prevent hematoma and keep the bandage for at least 4 hours.
- To eat and drink plenty of water to replenish volume lost during blood donation (5)
- Avoid sun or extreme heat exposure and alcohol intake for the next 24 hours to prevent dehydration.

- Avoid lifting heavy weights with a donation arm or participating in strenuous physical activities or sports after donation to prevent bruising of the venepuncture site and dizziness.(5)
- Eat iron and vitamin C rich food post-donation to replenish iron loss. Here are some examples of iron and vitamin C rich food: (4)

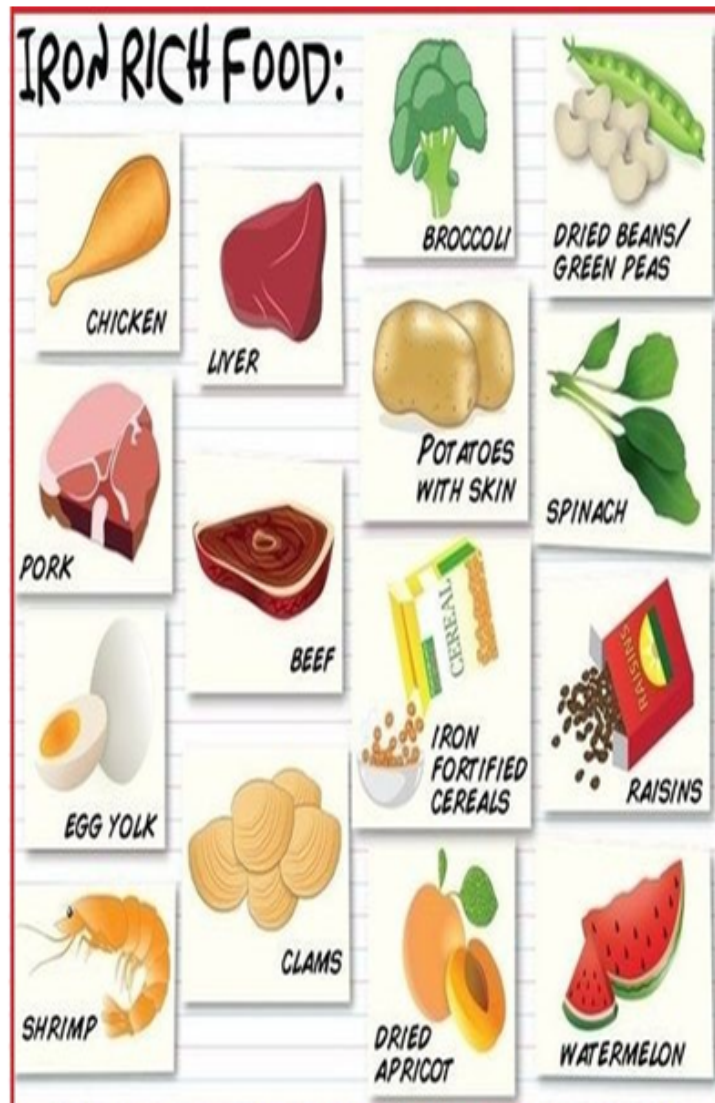


Image 1: Source Internet

Example of Iron rich food and vitamin C rich food

· If you feel dizzy, unwell or have cold sweats:

- i. Take a seat or lie down immediately, preferably with your feet raised, until the feeling passes.
- ii. Loosen any restrictive garments and keep breathing smoothly.
- iii. Keep calm and take slow and long deep breaths.
- iv. If symptom are not improving, visit the nearest klinik kesihatan or blood donation centre (6)

If the donor develops swelling or hematoma venepuncture site:

- i. Apply an ice pack the affected area for at least for 10 minutes or more in 24 hours.
- ii. Do not massage the swelling area for at least 48 hours.
- iii. Minimise movement over the swelling area.
- iv. Swelling or hematoma normally resolves within 3 days to 1 week. If the symptom is not improving, visit the nearest klinik kesihatan or blood donation centre (6)
- v. If the donor any history of adverse events, donor must inform medical personnel in charge during pre-donation counselling.



Image 2: Source Internet

Apply an ice pack the affected area for at least for 10 minutes if donor develop swelling or hematoma at venepuncture site

If you are a healthy adult who always wants to donate but is in doubt, this article might help. Every second, there may be a patient

waiting for a blood transfusion to survive. In parallel with World Health Organization (WHO) slogan 2023 give blood, give plasma, share life, share often you can play an important role in someone life by giving valuable gift of blood or plasma to them (7). Come and join us in becoming regular blood donors.

Our blood bank in Advanced Medical and Dental Institute (USM) door open for donor on:

Monday to Thursday	: 8.30am-12.30pm and 2.30pm - 4.30pm
Friday	: 8.30am -11.30pm and 2.45pm-4.30pm

We close on weekends and public holiday. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said it's not length of life, but depth of life. Let us be a reason for someone's smile.

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