



# Myth Busters: the truth about blood stem cell donation



You've got questions and we've got answers!  
Learn more about joining the registry and donating.

- MYTH:** Donating is very painful.
- FACT:** Donating is less painful than you probably think.
  - Many donors experience little to no pain while donating either blood stem cells or marrow.
  - Discomfort during recovery varies from person to person. Side effects depend on the method of donation and may include back pain, fatigue, headache or bruising for a few days or weeks.
  - The vast majority of donors say it was worth it to help save a life and they'd do it again.

- MYTH:** Matching blood stem cells is the same as matching blood type.
- FACT:** The genetic typing used to match donors to patients is much more complex than matching blood type.
  - Matching is based on your human leukocyte antigen (HLA), proteins—or markers—found on most cells in your body.
  - A patient and donor don't need to have the same blood type.

- MYTH:** I must be a certain weight to join the registry.
- FACT:** There are no weight requirements for joining the registry.
  - Anyone aged 18–40 who meets the medical guidelines can join the registry.
  - If you're a possible match for a patient, we'll discuss your health history further and arrange for a thorough physical exam. This is to ensure your safety and the patient's.
  - While height and weight are no longer used as determining factors for joining the registry, physicians and transplant centers consider them, in combination with other safety factors, to protect donor health and determine donation eligibility.

- MYTH:** Be The Match discriminates against people older than 40.
- FACT:** Age guidelines protect the safety of the donor and provide the best possible outcome for the patient. They aren't meant to discriminate in any way.
  - Donors between the ages of 18–35 provide the greatest chance for transplant success.
  - Doctors request donors in the 18–35 age group 75% of the time.

- MYTH:** I can't join the registry if I have a tattoo or body piercing.
- FACT:** Tattoos and piercings won't prevent you from joining or donating.

- MYTH:** I can't join the registry if I've recently traveled internationally.
- FACT:** You're able to register regardless of where you've traveled.
  - If you're selected as a potential donor, recent travel to areas at risk for infections such as malaria or mad cow disease will be evaluated.

- MYTH:** Gay men can't join or donate.
- FACT:** Members of the LGBTQIA+ community can join the registry and donate.
  - Be The Match doesn't ask about members' sexual orientation.
  - For medical reasons, everyone is asked to provide their sex assigned at birth when they register. Should you be called as a match, pronouns and gender identity are respected throughout the process.

Learn more at [BeTheMatch.org](https://www.BetheMatch.org)