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Myths About Stem Cell Donation

There are some myths about stem cell donation and we hope that reading the following will help to dispel them.

- [Stem cells are taken from the spinal cord.](#)
- [All stem cell donations involve surgery.](#)
- [Stem cell donation is painful.](#)
- [Stem cell donation involves a lengthy recovery process.](#)
- [If I donate stem cells, they cannot be replaced.](#)
- [I come from a large family, so if I ever need a stem cell transplant, I should have no problem finding a match within my family.](#)



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Myth: Stem cells are taken from the spinal cord.

Fact: The donor's spinal cord is unaffected in the collection of stem cells. For a bone marrow donation, the collection of the stem cells is taken from the iliac crest which sits at the back of the pelvic bone. The day-procedure (operation) takes place under general anaesthesia.

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Myth: All stem cell donations involve surgery.

Fact: Some donations involve surgery and some do not. Canadian Blood Services may ask donors to give stem cells from their bone marrow or peripheral blood. Where bone marrow donation is a surgical procedure, peripheral blood stem cell donation is a non-surgical procedure done in an outpatient clinic.

Peripheral blood stem cell donation involves removing a donor's blood through a sterile needle in one arm. The blood is passed through a machine that separates out the stem cells used in transplantation. The remaining blood is returned through the other arm.

The patient's doctor will decide what type of donation is best for the patient.

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Myth: Stem cell donation is painful.

Fact: Canadian Blood Services facilitates two types of procedures - stem cell donation from bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cell donation. For bone marrow donation, the collection of stem cells is taken from the iliac crest and this type of procedure is done under general anaesthetic so the donor experiences no pain. For peripheral blood stem cell donation, the collection is a non-surgical procedure done in an outpatient

donation, the collection is a non-surgical procedure done in an outpatient clinic and does not involve anaesthetic. The donor does not experience pain during either procedure.

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Myth: Stem cell donation involves a lengthy recovery process.

“ (After donation) Most donors are back to their usual routine in a few days. ”



Fact: Bone marrow donors can expect to feel some soreness in their lower back. There have also been reports of donors feeling tired and having some discomfort walking for a couple of days or longer. Most donors are back to their usual routine in a few days. Some may take a few weeks before they feel completely recovered.

Peripheral blood stem cell donors report varying symptoms including headache, bone or muscle pain, nausea, insomnia and fatigue. These effects disappear shortly after donating.

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Myth: If I donate stem cells, they cannot be replaced.

Fact: The body replaces the stem cells within six weeks. After donating, most donors are back to their usual routine in a few days.

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Myth: I come from a large family, so if I ever need a stem cell transplant, I should have no problem finding a match within my family.

Fact: The requirements for finding a match are so precise that fewer than 30% of those in need can receive a transplant from someone in their own family. That is why we maintain the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network - a network of Canadians who are ready to donate to any patient in need.

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