

# Blood Donation Process



**Step 1:**  
Welcome! Please complete the donor questionnaire honestly.



**Step 2:**  
Your details are captured and a fingerprick test is done to check your haemoglobin level.



**Step 3:**  
Have your medical screening with blood pressure & pulse checked. Our nurse will check your questionnaire and offer you iron tablets if you are eligible.



**Step 4:**  
Collect your blood pack and proceed to the donation bed.



**Step 5:**  
Donate your unit of lifesaving blood. New, sterile equipment is used for every donation. A blood sample is taken now to test your ferritin level in our laboratory.



**Step 6:**  
Enjoy some refreshments - you are remarkable and deserve it!

# Contact Details



## Telephone numbers

Toll-free 0800 625 663  
Main Switchboard 021 507 6300



## WhatsApp

060 549 7244



## Email

info@wcbs.org.za



## Website

www.wcbs.org.za



## WCBS App

Download on Google Play or App Store



## Head Office Address

Western Cape Blood Service  
3 Oude Molen Road, Ndabeni, 7405  
PO Box 79, Howard Place, 7450

## Find us on social media:



## ALL ABOUT

# Iron, Haemoglobin and Ferritin



# Thank you

for being a blood donor. Your well-being is important to us, so we would like to show you some of the ways we try to protect you.

## Did you know?

You lose 200-250 mg of iron when you donate one unit of whole blood.



### What are haemoglobin and iron?

Haemoglobin is a protein found inside our red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body through the bloodstream.

Our bodies need iron, an essential mineral found in the food we eat, to produce haemoglobin and to maintain general health and well-being.

### How does blood donation affect my haemoglobin and iron levels?

When you donate whole blood, you are donating your red blood cells, which contain haemoglobin. This results in a temporary drop in haemoglobin levels. To ensure it's safe for you to donate, we conduct a fingerprick test before each donation to check your haemoglobin level.

After donating, your body uses its iron stores to replenish your lost haemoglobin and red blood cells. These iron stores will eventually be replaced through your diet over time. We also measure your iron stores (known as ferritin) using a blood sample taken during your donation.

### How would low iron levels affect me?

Maintaining healthy iron stores is essential. Low iron levels, even if your haemoglobin is normal, can lead to you having less energy, trouble focusing and difficulty exercising. Low iron can also result in low haemoglobin, which may cause you to feel breathless and dizzy, as your body has to work harder to deliver oxygen throughout your system.

### How can I replace the iron lost in my donation?

The time it takes to replace the iron used to replenish your red cells after a donation varies from person to person; it generally takes longer for people with higher iron requirements (e.g. younger or female donors) or those with low dietary iron intake (e.g. vegans or vegetarians).

WCBS offers iron tablets to people who have donated a unit of blood to replace the iron lost through donation. However, we cannot give you iron tablets if you do not pass the haemoglobin test before your donation.



### Before you donate blood

We check your haemoglobin (Hb) using a fingerprick blood sample. Your haemoglobin level must be within an acceptable range for you to donate.

	Females	Males
Whole blood donation	12.5 - 19.9 g/dl	13.5 - 19.9 g/dl
Source plasma donation	12.0 - 16.0 g/dl	12.0 - 16.0 g/dl

If your Hb is too low or too high, you will not be permitted to donate blood that day, but can return another time.



### When you donate

We also take a blood sample to test your ferritin level; this is tested in our laboratory. You will be notified after your donation if your ferritin level is too low (below 16 ug/l) or too high (above 500 ug/l).

Donors with ferritin levels below 6 ug/l will not be permitted to donate blood for six months to allow their iron stores to recover. Donors with high ferritin levels can continue to donate, but are advised to have the cause of their high iron stores investigated.

### WCBS iron replacement tablets

All donors who donate a unit of blood are welcome to take a course of iron tablets to help replace the iron lost during donation.

### Who should not take iron tablets?

You should not take iron tablets if you are allergic to iron or any of the ingredients listed in the tablets, have kidney disease, hereditary haemochromatosis or other iron-overload conditions. If you are unsure, please consult your doctor.

### Directions for iron tablet use

Please read the package insert before starting your iron tablets and follow the dosing instructions of one tablet per day.

Keep iron tablets out of reach of children, as an overdose can be fatal. In the event of an emergency, contact the helpline numbers provided on the container.

Certain foods and drinks, such as tea, coffee, dairy products, and high-fibre cereals, can reduce iron absorption. In contrast, foods and drinks containing Vitamin C, such as oranges, can improve absorption.

If you have any queries, please contact us.