Applying to join the Irish Bone Marrow Registry

What is Bone Marrow?

Bone Marrow is essentially the blood factory that makes red and white blood cells, and platelets. A Bone Marrow transplant involves replacing a patient's bone marrow with healthy bone marrow from a donor. Bone Marrow transplants are used to treat patients with cancers of the blood, bone marrow failure, and rare blood disorders in children.

Essential criteria to be placed on the Bone Marrow Registry:

Being a Bone Marrow donor is unfortunately not possible or suitable for everybody. Every person's blood has its own HLA tissue markers. Since billions of combinations of HLA markers are possible, finding a matching donor is a long and complicated process. It means some people are more suitable to be donors than others. That's why criteria is applied to determining who should be typed and placed on the register.

To register as bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cell donor, you must:

- Be aged between **18** and **45**

- Weigh a minimum of **50 kgs (7st & 12 lbs)** and a maximum of **130 kgs (20 st & 6 lbs)**
  *Eligibility may also depend on height of applicant

- Be at least **120cm** in height

- **NOT** have lived for more than 1 year in the UK (including Northern Ireland) between 1980 and 1996

- **NOT** have back problems such as disc or ligament problems

  Other medical criteria may apply during medical interview stage.

What happens at the blood sample clinic?

Before we take any blood sample, we will ask you to undertake a more detailed extended criteria interview by a nurse to ensure your blood is suitable and safe for the registry.

After that, a small sample of your blood will be taken and sent to our matching Lab for HLA tissue marker typing and then placed on the Irish registry.

Once on the registry, this means your blood details are available to be searched by registries worldwide looking for suitable matches for patients. This means in the future you could be asked to attend in Ireland to donate bone marrow for a patient anywhere in the world.

What else can I do to help?

There are so many tissue types that it is very likely that a large number of volunteer donors on the panel will never be asked to donate. You may only be asked if your sample is matched against a patient requiring a bone marrow transplant.

However, you can help patients with cancer and other illnesses by becoming a platelet donor in our Dublin and Cork fixed centre clinics, or by becoming a blood donor at our regular blood donation clinics nationwide.

The compatability match for blood components is slightly different but if you are eligible to be a donor, your blood and platelets will be used to save patients lives in Ireland. You can find more information about whether you can become a platelets or blood donor, and where, at www.giveblood.ie

What happens if I am matched with a patient requiring a transplant?

You will be asked to confirm your interest in still being a donor, and following a full medical assessment you are brought into hospital for the collection procedure.

The consultant in charge of the patient will decide whether the patient requires a bone marrow transplant or a peripheral blood stem cells transplant.

If you become a bone marrow donor, bone marrow will be collected from your pelvic bones under a general anaesthetic. The donor is usually in hospital for two days. This is a very safe procedure, but the donor can feel some discomfort in the days following donation.

Alternatively, blood stem cells are collected using a stem cell separator machine. This involves taking medication for five days and then the stem cells are harvested from your blood through the veins in your arm. The whole process takes one to four hours as an outpatient.

The Irish Unrelated Bone marrow Registry will aim to cover any loss of earnings or expenses the donor may incur during the donation process.

There is more information available at **www.giveblood.ie**

giveblood.ie