

Myths vs. Facts

Commonly held misconceptions about marrow donation can discourage some from joining the Registry. Let us set the record straight.

MYTH: Marrow donation is painful.

FACT: Donors experience no pain during marrow donation, as this procedure uses general or regional anesthesia.

MYTH: All donations involve surgery.

FACT: Some donations involve surgery and some do not. The patient's doctor requests either a marrow donation, a surgical procedure, or a peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC) donation, which is non-surgical.

MYTH: Pieces of bone are removed from the donor.

FACT: No pieces of bone are removed in marrow donation. Only the liquid marrow found inside the bones is needed to save the patient's life.

MYTH: Donating marrow is dangerous and weakens the donor.

FACT: Though no medical procedure is without risk, there are rarely any long-term effects from donating marrow. The National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) screens all donors carefully before they donate, to ensure they are healthy and the procedure is safe for them. After donation the body replaces its marrow within four to six weeks.

MYTH: Marrow donation involves a lengthy recovery.

FACT: Most donors are back to their normal routine within a few days. Marrow donors can expect to feel some soreness in their lower back for several days or longer. They may also feel tired or experience discomfort walking for a short while before symptoms disappear. Peripheral Blood Stem Cell donors may have symptoms such as headache, bone or muscle pain, nausea, insomnia or fatigue. These symptoms disappear shortly after donating.