

Questions & Answers

Q: How are patients matched with donors?

A: Proteins called antigens are found on the surface of the white blood cells and other body tissue. Particular antigens, named HLA-A, HLA-B and HLA-DR are essential to the success of stem cell transplants. These antigens are used to "match" a patient with a donor. When looking for a match it's important to remember that people of the same race and ethnic groups are more likely to match each other.

Related Links: [HLA Matching](#)

Q: What are the chances of finding a match?

A: Approximately 80 percent of all patients identify at least one potential match on their preliminary search. This number has improved significantly (in 1991, it was 41 percent) because of increased recruitment efforts to add racial and ethnic diversity to the Registry. Remember, however, that not all of the 80 percent of patients who identify an identical donor at the preliminary search will necessarily go on to the transplant stage. Similarly, the 20 percent who do not immediately find a match may subsequently locate one or else receive a transplant from a donor who is less than a complete match.

Related Links: [The Search Process](#)

Q: Can someone who is identified as a potential donor match decline to donate?

A: Sometimes a potential donor who is successfully matched with a patient needing a transplant may decide not to go forward with the procedure. There are many reasons for saying no, including illness, amount of time involved, the risk, or even fear of the donation process. As a volunteer, the donor is under no form of legal obligation. Individual decisions are always respected.

However, because a late decision not to donate can be life-threatening to the patient, the significance of this decision is explained to the donor right from the start. A last minute change of mind may be fatal to the patient awaiting the transplant. Many people contacted to be stem cell donors experience some hesitation, which is perfectly natural. Donating marrow or **PBSC** is a serious commitment. But most decide to go ahead with the procedure once they balance all the facts and consider what their decision will mean to themselves and the recipient.

Related Links: [Understanding Your Commitment](#)

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Q: How will I know whether I'll be asked to donate marrow or PBSC?

A: If it has been determined that you are a complete match for the patient, you will be told which method the patient's physician requests prior to your preparation to donate. You will receive further education about bone marrow and PBSC donation. You will then be asked to sign an "Intent to Donate" or "Consent" form. At this point, the donor needs to be absolutely certain about making the donation because the patient will begin to undergo treatment to prepare for the transplant.

Related Links: [When You're asked to Donate](#)

Q: Who pays for the donation procedure? How much does it cost?

A: All medical costs for the donation procedure are covered by the patient or the patient's medical insurance, as are travel expenses and other non-medical costs. The only "costs" to the donor might be time taken off from work.

For more Frequently Asked Questions please refer to the official NMDP Website:
<http://www.marrow.org>