



# Geben für Leben

Leukämiehilfe Österreich

I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A DONOR...

## DONOR INFORMATION

### FOR STEM CELL AND BONE MARROW DONORS

Thank you for your interest in becoming a bone marrow or stem cell donor. This donation is often the only way to keep a patient with leukemia or a blood disorder from dying. The stem cells in your bone marrow can replace a patient's diseased stem cells, giving them a chance to survive. We would like to inform you about some important points:

Your tissue characteristics (= HLA characteristics) determine which patient you will match with as a donor. These characteristics can be found in several areas of the body. They can also be found in saliva and blood. A cheek swab is taken for typing.

In recent years, a new method of donating stem cells has been developed. In this method, the donor is given a drug called Neupogen to stimulate the **blood stem cells** in the body. Neupogen is a messenger substance released by the body during infections to stimulate the production of new stem cells. As part of this four-day stimulation (the donor gives himself two small injections in the abdominal crease each day), some of the blood-forming stem cells are also released into the blood for a short time.

On the fifth day, the donor is connected to a cell separator (a centrifuge that can separate the blood into its components). This collects the stem cells from the donor's peripheral blood. This process takes about three to five hours and is done on an outpatient basis (similar to dialysis or blood purification).

In 80% of all cases, this is the procedure used to collect the blood stem cells. Side effects during the preparation period include flu-like symptoms such as aching bones, limbs and muscles, possibly headache and nausea. These symptoms can be relieved with appropriate medication.

**Bone marrow donation** is only performed in about 20% of cases (very often in young children). In this procedure, the blood stem cells are collected by puncturing the iliac crest. The procedure takes about an hour and is performed under general anesthesia. The donor is discharged from the hospital the next day. Side effects include some bleeding and soreness in the upper gluteal muscles. Heavy lifting should be avoided for about 14 days after the donation.

To avoid common misconceptions, blood stem cells are located in the bone marrow. The spinal cord in the spinal canal has nothing to do with it and is therefore never touched!

Transplant specialists decide on a case-by-case basis which type of donation will be most successful for the patient.

Prior to any stem cell/bone marrow donation, a thorough medical evaluation and discussion with a physician from our partner clinic will take place. The evaluation includes

- Physical examination
- ECG
- Ultrasound of the liver, spleen and kidneys
- X-rays of the lungs and heart
- Blood samples for further laboratory tests
- Personal information session with a physician

The purpose of these examinations is to rule out any health risks for both the donor and the patient. The physician advises and informs the donor so that any concerns can be discussed and resolved.

In principle, anyone between the ages of 16 (although they are not activated for the global database until the age of 18) and 45, who weighs at least 50 kg and is in good health can register. However, you should have the intention of being available to donate to anyone in need, regardless of age, background, nationality or religious affiliation.

Like giving blood, donating bone marrow/stem cells is a humanitarian act that costs the donor nothing. However, you will not be paid for your donation. All costs associated with the donation (e.g., travel, lodging, meals, etc.) are covered by “Geben für Leben”.

Your donation is initially anonymous. You will not learn anything personal about the patient, and the patient will not learn anything about you (except possibly country, gender and age). Depending on the patient's country of origin, it may be possible to get to know each other after two years, if both parties wish to do so. Prior to this, anonymous letters can be exchanged (coordinated by “Geben für Leben”).

During the bone marrow/stem cell donation, you are covered by a high level of supplementary insurance. The donation itself takes place at our partners in Austria or Germany. Once your donation is confirmed, we will forward your information to them.

The cost of 40 Euros per typing is 100% covered by donations. Therefore, we are very grateful for every voluntary donation. It is only through donations that further typing can be carried out and new hope can be given!

**Privacy Policy:**

Both your medical and personal information (name, date of birth, and contact information) will be managed by the “Geben für Leben” donor database. This data will be used exclusively for the purpose of stem cell/bone marrow donation. By means of a pseudonymized numerical code, your HLA characteristics are entered into the worldwide database and remain there until you reach the age of 60. Until then, you may be asked to donate to a patient at any time. In the event of a stem cell or bone marrow donation, we will contact you and support you throughout the process.

**Right of withdrawal:**

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. However, if you withdraw early in the process, there may be significant health risks to the patient.