

Indefinite Deferral for History of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Canadian Blood Services is undertaking a deferral to protect blood product recipients from any potential risk that could come from a link between Xenotropic Murine Leukemia Virus-Related Virus (XMRV) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). XMRV is a type of retrovirus originating in mice ("murine" relates to mice).

Although the media is reporting that XMRV may be a threat to the blood supply, the deferral Canadian Blood Services is undertaking at this point relates to those patients with a history of CFS only. At this point there is no evidence that XMRV causes any disease in humans. This new information has reported association, but not causality.

Today, donors who have a history of CFS and who are well again are allowed to donate blood. Under the new deferral, it is this group that will no longer be able to donate blood at Canadian Blood Services' clinics. Blood donors with a history of CFS represent a very small segment of Canadian Blood Services' donor base, so the impact on the blood supply will be minimal.

Donors with active cases of CFS don't usually come in to donate blood because they are not feeling well. Historically, however, Canadian Blood Services has allowed people with a history of the illness to donate. This is what will change with the new deferral.

Health Canada, the body that regulates Canadian Blood Services, has approved this deferral. Implementation will occur in late April.

It is important to note that the available data related to the link between XMRV and CFS is conflicting. While it has been reported to have a strong association in American patients, the finding has not been substantiated in patients in the UK or the Netherlands, suggesting some geographic differences in the pattern of virus spread. Furthermore, there are as yet no data confirming that XMRV causes disease. So at this time, it is not possible to quantify the risk a donor with a history of CFS could pose to a blood recipient.

Once the scientific community understands more about the role of XMRV or other viruses in relation to chronic fatigue, Canadian Blood Services will revisit the deferral decision to determine whether the deferral is still warranted. Canadian Blood Services is part of an inter-agency North American task force led by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) that is investigating the XMRV issue.

How Canadian Blood Services currently handles potential threats to the blood supply system:

Canadian Blood Services operates one of the safest blood systems in the world. An essential element of our commitment to safety is our multilayered approach to ensuring that our blood products meet the highest level of safety available.

Before they donate, donors are asked an extensive list of questions about their behaviour and about their health status. People, who are unhealthy, including those with symptomatic diseases, are deferred from donation.

The organization then subjects each and every donation to a variety of blood screening tests for pathogens that are known to be transmissible by blood transfusion including HIV and the hepatitis B and C viruses.

Canadian Blood Services also maintains strong international networks with other blood systems to monitor the behaviour of possible pathogenic threats to the blood supply, so that if a new pathogen appears we can be ready to respond to the threat.





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Blood Service updates CFS donor policy

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The Blood Service has decided to indefinitely defer donors with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS).

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service will indefinitely defer donors who have been diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS).

This follows recent research, describing a possible link between chronic fatigue, and a retrovirus called Xenotropic Murine leukaemia virus-related Virus (XMRV).

As the Blood Service currently defers donors who have CFS, this change will delay their return to donating until there is more scientific literature on the possible viral link.

The number one priority of the Blood Service remains the safety of Australia's blood supply.

Blood Service specialist, Dr Tony Keller, said eligibility to donate is always a balance between risk and benefit.

"There is at present no test available for CFS or XMRV, but our donor questionnaire alerts us when someone has CFS. Very few donors will be affected by this decision," Dr Keller said.

"The science on this internationally is unclear. The recent North American research findings haven't been supported by research undertaken in Europe, and there is currently no Australian research on XMRV.

"We will review our decision in two years time, when further studies into the virus have been done."

The Blood Service currently has 570,000 donors a year. In the past two years, there have been only 70 donors deferred due to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

We are writing to a small number of donors to notify them of this change.

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Detailed Eligibility Criteria and FAQ's

[Antibiotics - I am taking antibiotics. Can I donate?](#)

[Accidents - I was involved in an accident and had stitches or other treatment. Can I donate?](#)

[Acne - I have active acne. Can I donate?](#)

[Acupuncture - I have just had acupuncture. Can I donate?](#)

[Addiction - Drugs. Can I donate if I have every injected or taken drugs?](#)

[Age - How does age affect my ability to donate?](#)

[Alcohol - I had several alcoholic drinks before going to give blood. Can I donate?](#)

[Allergy - I am allergic to one of the following: dust / a food / a medicine / an insect sting / other. Can I donate?](#)

[Anaemia - I have been anaemic. Can I donate?](#)

[Angioplasty - I have had an angioplasty. Can I donate?](#)

[Antibiotics - I am taking antibiotics. Can I donate?](#)

[Antidepressants - I take an antidepressant. Can I donate?](#)

[Arrhythmia - I have abnormal heart beats or I am being treated for an abnormal heart beat. Can I donate?](#)

[Arthritis - I have arthritis. Can I donate?](#)

[Asthma - I have asthma. Can I donate?](#)

[Bleeding disorder - I have been diagnosed with a bleeding condition/disorder. Can I donate?](#)

[Blood borne diseases - what is tested for?](#)

[Blood pressure - I take high blood pressure medicine. Can I donate?](#)

[Blood transfusion - I have had a blood transfusion. Can I donate?](#)

[Blood volume - What is the volume of blood in a person's body?](#)

[Body piercing - I have just had a part of my body pierced. Can I donate?](#)

[Breast-feeding - I am breast-feeding. Can I donate?](#)

[Cancer - I had cancer. Can I donate?](#)

[Chicken pox - I have chicken pox. Can I donate?](#)

[Childbirth - How long after the birth of my baby. Can I donate?](#)

[Cholecystectomy - I have had my gall bladder removed. Can I donate?](#)

[Cholecystitis - I have had cholecystitis recently. Can I donate?](#)

[Cholesterol - I take medication for cholesterol reduction. Can I donate?](#)

[Chronic fatigue syndrome - I have had chronic fatigue syndrome. Can I donate?](#)

[People with a diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome are permanently deferred from donating blood in New Zealand.](#)

[Coeliac Disease - I have Coeliac Disease. Can I donate?](#)

[Cold sores - Can I donate if I have a cold sore?](#)

[Colds - I have a cold. Can I donate?](#)

[Concussion - I was knocked unconscious. Can I donate?](#)

[Condoms - What if I use Condoms Every Time?](#)

[Conjunctivitis - I have conjunctivitis. Can I donate?](#)

[Contraceptive pill - I take birth control pills. Can I donate?](#)

[Corneal Graft - Corneal transplant. I have had a corneal transplant. Can I donate?](#)

[Correctional institutions - Why doesn't the NZ Blood Service collect blood from inmates of correctional institutions?](#)

[Crohn's Disease - I have Crohn's Disease. Can I donate?](#)

[Cystitis - I have had cystitis recently. Can I donate?](#)

[Cytomegalovirus \(CMV\) infection - I have been diagnosed with cytomegalovirus infection. Can I donate?](#)

[Deep vein thrombosis \(DVT\) - I have had a deep vein thrombosis in a leg. Can I donate?](#)

[Dengue fever - I had dengue fever. Can I donate?](#)

[Dental treatment - I have just been to the dentist. Can I donate?](#)

[Depression - I am being treated for depression. Can I donate?](#)

[Dermatitis - I have dermatitis. Can I donate?](#)

[Diabetes - I am diabetic. Can I donate?](#)

[Diarrhoea - I have diarrhoea. Can I donate?](#)

[Disability - I have a physical disability. Can I donate?](#)

[Diverticulitis/diverticulosis - I have diverticulitis or diverticulosis. Can I donate?](#)

[Drug use \(recreational\) - Can I still donate blood even if I have taken recreational drugs?](#)

[Ear piercing - I have just had my ears pierced. Can I still donate blood?](#)

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