Iron Information for Blood Donors

Thank you for coming to donate blood today. We care about your health and want you to know that donating blood reduces iron stores in your body. Your body needs iron to make new red blood cells. Red blood cells deliver oxygen to all the tissues of the body through the actions of an iron-containing protein called hemoglobin. In many people, this reduction in iron levels is temporary and has no effect on their health. However, in some individuals, particularly younger women and frequent donors of both genders, blood donation can cause or worsen iron deficiency and/or anemia (low red blood cells).

It’s important to replace the iron lost between donations to maintain good health. It is recommended that all donors eat a well-balanced diet that includes foods rich in iron. Additionally, we recommend you consult your healthcare provider before taking extra iron in the form of vitamins with iron or iron supplements. The amount of iron you need will depend on various factors including your age, gender, and how often you donate blood. Taking too much iron may be harmful. It is also important to know that iron supplements may mask other serious health conditions. Please discuss with your healthcare provider whether you should have an exam before taking iron supplements. He or she can help you decide the best approach for you.