

Frequently Asked Questions: Designated Blood and Platelet Donations

What is a designated donation?

A designated donation is a blood or platelet donation made for a specific patient, typically from a relative or friend. The donor and recipient are known to each other, and the donation is intended for the recipient's use.

Are designated donations safer than community (volunteer) donations?

No; designated donors are required to undergo the exact same donor screening process as volunteer blood donors. Medical literature shows designated donations are not safer and may even pose increased risk. Donors known to the recipient might feel pressure to donate, potentially leading to incomplete or dishonest responses during health screening. This undermines the safety protocols designed to protect recipients.

When are designated donations permitted?

Designated donations are typically necessary when:

- The patient has a rare blood type and compatible allogeneic units are unavailable.
- There are special clinical requirements such as rare antibodies.

They are not medically necessary:

- For preference (e.g., avoiding vaccinated donors).
- When suitable community donor units are available.

Are there fees associated with designated donation?

Yes. While there may be no fee for the donor, hospitals may charge the patient's account for processing, testing, and special handling.

How far in advance must designated donations be made?

Blood donations must be made at least 3 business days prior to the patient's scheduled procedure to allow for full testing and processing.

What happens if the unit is not compatible or not used?

- If the blood type of the designated red cell unit does not match with the patient's blood type requirement, the unit will be transferred to regular inventory.
- If it is not needed, the unit may be returned to the regular inventory.

If a donor identifies as neither male nor female, can they donate apheresis?

- Donors must share their gender at birth to qualify for platelet apheresis procedure.

What are the eligibility requirements for designated donors?

Designated donors must:

- Meet allogenic donor criteria for blood donation. ([Eligibility](#))
- Be in good general health and feeling well on the day of donation.
- Not have a history of HIV, hepatitis B or C, syphilis or other disqualifying infectious disease.
- Be at least 17 years old, or 16 with parental consent.
- Be male donors or from females who have not been pregnant.
- Female donors with pregnancy history are restricted from donating designated platelets.
- Mothers who have undergone a vaginal delivery must wait **6 weeks**, and mothers who have had a C-Section must wait **6 months** following the procedure before donating.

Why can't some female donors provide platelets?

To reduce the risk of Transfusion-Related Acute Lung Injury (TRALI), AABB Standard 5.4.1.2 requires that plasma-containing components (like platelets) be sourced from donors unlikely to have HLA antibodies. Women with a history of pregnancy are more likely to carry these antibodies.

Do designated donations need to be irradiated?

Platelet donations undergo the pathogen reduction process. Platelet donations not qualifying for pathogen reduction will be irradiated.

What infectious disease testing is performed on designated units?

All designated donations are screened with required FDA infectious disease tests. Reactive units are discarded, and results are confidential.

What is the expiration of designated donations?

- Red blood cells 42 days, depending on processing.
- Platelets: 5 days from collection.

What should patients or physicians do to initiate a designated donation?

1. The patient's physician must assess medical need and complete a Designated Donor prescription order.
2. Once the prescription has been completed and signed by the provider, prospective Designated Donors should contact Inova Blood Donor Services at **1-866-256-6372** to schedule an appointment to donate and indicate that you would like to make a "**Designated Donation**".
3. Ensure both donor and patient consent is obtained.
4. Inova Blood Donor Services reserves the right to decline designated platelet donation requests if not clinically indicated.

References:

AABB Technical Manual, 20th ed.
AABB Standards for Blood Banks and Transfusion Services, 33rd ed.
FDA 21 CFR Part 1271, subpart C