

# FAINTING

It is important to be aware that some donors feel faint after giving blood. During blood donation 8-10% of the blood volume is removed. Most people adapt quickly to this loss and their system is not upset by it, but a few individuals do not adapt as well and consequently feel faint. We hope this helps explain why some donors feel faint after giving blood.

The effects of blood donation are aggravated by various factors.

- People who weigh less than 110 lbs. are more likely to faint if they give blood because they lose relatively more of their blood volume than larger people. Therefore we advise them not to donate, in the interests of their own health and well-being.
- People who smoke soon after giving blood are more likely to feel faint because of the effects of nicotine.
- People who take alcohol within a few hours of giving blood are more likely to feel faint because alcohol dilates the blood vessels. This causes less blood to be available to circulate to the brain leading to dizziness and fainting.
- Being in a hot room also causes the blood vessels to dilate and thus has a similar effect to alcohol.
- Rushing about, or vigorous exercise, can also produce similar effects.
- Missing meals and not replacing fluids means a delay in the recovery from blood donation.
- Standing still for long periods of time can lead to pooling of blood in the legs, a situation similar to soldiers on parade. This reduces the amount of blood available to the brain.

If you rush about, miss a meal, have a "liquid lunch", a cigarette, or get overheated, you may feel faint even if it is several hours since you gave blood.

If you do feel faint it is important to:

- Tell someone: a staff member if you are at a blood drive, or a co-worker, friend or family member.
- Lie down, or bend forward with your head between your knees, until the feeling passes. Make sure that when you get up you do so slowly. If you still feel faint, lie down again.

Feeling faint can happen to anyone. But it can often be avoided by following this advice:

- Keep your dressing on for 6 hours, and keep it clean and dry.
- Increase your fluid intake prior to donating-- and for the next two days.
- If you smoke, refrain for at least 1/2 hour.

If problems persist you can get advice by calling:

In Manhattan, **212-468-2080**

In Queens, Nassau & Suffolk, **516-478-5030**

In New Jersey, **732-220-7026**

In the Bronx & Hudson Valley, **914-784-4623**

In Brooklyn & Staten Island, **718-797-7800**