

News story: More people will be able to give blood following scientific review

The government has announced changes to blood donation rules following a review by the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO).

As a result of the latest clinical evidence, more people will be given the opportunity to donate blood without affecting the safety of the blood supply, from early 2018.

Current blood donation rules prevent people who engage in some sexual behaviours from giving blood for a 12 month period. As a result of scientific advances and improved understanding of the tests used, the deferral period for these people will now be reduced to 3 months.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) will also be looking at ways to allow more people to donate blood without impacting blood safety. This includes more personalised risk assessments.

| Deferral Criteria | Current deferral period/ testing regime | Recommended deferral period |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A man who has had oral or anal sex with another man (with or without condom) | 12 months | 3 months |
| Commercial sex workers | Permanent | 3 months |
| Sex with a high risk partner | 12 months | 3 months |
| Sex with a partner who has been sexually active in areas where HIV is common | 12 months | 3 months |

The UK has one of the safest blood supplies in the world and these rules are in place to keep blood donors and the patients who receive their blood safe.

These reductions are based on the most up to date scientific evidence and medical advances.

The government will now work with NHSBT to implement the changes to deferrals for sexual behaviours from early 2018.

SaBTO Chair and Consultant Physician, Professor James Neuberger said:

SaBTO has made these recommendations following a review of the latest scientific evidence. The UK now has a better understanding of infection transmission and is leading the way after this

comprehensively researched and validated 3-month deferral period.

The UK has one of the safest blood supplies in the world, and experts from around the country have analysed the latest information so even more people can have the opportunity to donate blood.

Dr Gail Mifflin, Medical and Research Director at NHS Blood and Transplant said:

NHS Blood and Transplant welcomes the Department of Health's decision to amend the rules around blood donation related to specific activities. These changes will offer more people the chance to give blood.

They take into account the latest available medical and scientific evidence. This included more extensive information now available about the risk of acquiring infections that can be passed on in blood and also more evidence that supports the reliability of the blood screening tests we use.

We have one of the safest blood supplies in the world. Anyone may require a blood transfusion in the future and so it's in all our interests to ensure that we work hard to keep blood safe for patients.

This starts with selection of donors before they give blood. Everyone must answer questions on their health and lifestyle before they donate, and answering these questions correctly is crucial, in order to keep blood safe.

In addition, the government will be submitting the evidence for the committee's full recommendations on deferral periods including for acupuncture, piercing and tattooing, and flexible endoscopy as part of a wider European evidence evaluation. There will be a further announcement of the following recommendations in due course:

| Deferral criteria | Current deferral period/ testing regime | Recommended deferral period |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tattooing (licensed in UK) | 12 months or 4 with negative Hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | No deferral |
| Tattooing (non -UK or unlicensed) | 12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | 3 months |
| Body Piercing(licensed in UK) | 12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative Hep B anti-core | No deferral |

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| Body Piercing(non-UK or unlicensed) | 12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | 3 months |
| Acupuncture, cosmetic (qualified practitioner in UK) | 12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | No deferral |
| Acupuncture, cosmetic (non UK or unqualified practitioner) | 12 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | 3 months |
| Endoscopy | 6 months or 4 with negative hepatitis C test, negative hep B anti-core | No deferral |
| Any history of non-prescribed IM or IV injecting drug use, including body-building hormones and steroids | Permanent | 12 months |

For more information visit the [NHSBT website](#).