



Hemochromatosis and Blood Donor Eligibility

Introduction:

Rock River Valley Blood Center is accepting Hereditary Hemochromatosis (HH) patients as volunteer blood donors. The new policy is the result of requests by patients with HH to have their blood used for transfusion rather than being discarded. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have issued a guidance that allows changing the eligibility criteria for blood donation by these patients. The new guidance allows donors with HH to donate under the same circumstances as any other volunteer blood donor, except that he/she may be permitted to donate more frequently than every 56 days.

Volunteer donors:

HH patients were not considered volunteer donors as required by the blood center and FDA because of concerns their donation might be motivated by a desire to avoid paying therapeutic phlebotomy fees. Volunteer donors are one of the most important safeguards for the blood supply because they donate for the sole reason of helping others. There is no doubt about the truthfulness of their responses to screening questions which assess high-risk behaviors associated with blood-borne diseases like hepatitis and HIV. If a donor is motivated by an incentive, the safety of the blood supply might be compromised.

Changing our Policy:

Even though blood from HH patients has traditionally been discarded, it is actually safe for patient transfusions. The FDA has changed labeling regulations, allowing blood centers to use this lifesaving blood for transfusion. The change will conserve a precious resource at a time when national blood shortages are frequent. Hemochromatosis is hereditary, not an infection, so it cannot be passed on through a transfusion. In addition, HH donors must meet all the donor eligibility and testing requirements that assure blood safety. HH patients who do not want their blood used for transfusion can choose not to participate in this program and will not be charged for having their blood drawn.

Other Reasons for Therapeutic Phlebotomy

As a service to patients with other conditions requiring therapeutic phlebotomy, the Rock River Valley Blood Center will draw their blood as ordered by their physician and discard it according to federal and state regulations. There will be no charge for having their blood drawn. All therapeutic phlebotomies require an appointment.

Contact the Rock River Valley Blood Center

If you are interested in the service provided by RRVBC, please discuss this with your physician. An order from your physician on a special form that we will provide upon request is required. Upon receipt of the physician order, the Special Services Team at the Rock River Valley Blood Center will contact you with information and set up an appointment. Should you have any questions, please call the Special Services Coordinator at 815-965-8751.