

ARCBS DONOR POLICY FACT SHEET

MALE TO MALE SEX

This fact sheet provides information concerning the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS) donor deferral policies, particularly with respect to male to male sex.

The relevant **eligibility criteria** for donors are listed on the Frequently Asked Questions page. Anyone who has engaged in male to male sex is deferred by the ARCBS from blood donation for a period of twelve months following the last occurrence of such activity.

The deferral of males who have had male to male sex is based on two factors: the statistically higher incidence of some blood borne diseases (such as HIV) and the existence of 'window period' infections.

In terms of statistics, the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (University of New South Wales) reports that men with a history of male to male sexual contact continue to make up the majority of people diagnosed with AIDS and HIV infection in Australia. These statistics are regularly reviewed by ARCBS.

A window period infection is the time between contraction of a disease and the ability to detect the infection using currently available screening tests. This window period contributes to the risk of the disease not being detected and being passed on in the blood supply.

In Australia, State and Territory legislation and governments require that the ARCBS screens blood donors on the basis of declared issues. The ARCBS uses the Donor Questionnaire to perform this screen and determine donor eligibility. All donors are required to answer Yes or No to the question relating to male to male sex (along with other questions relating to identified risk factors) and sign a declaration that they have answered the question honestly and to the best of their knowledge. A false declaration will result in prosecution.

Our community demands, and is entitled to, the safest possible blood supply and our actions are focused on delivering sufficient and safe blood to all who require it.