Getting donors back into the system – Canadian Blood Services’ donor re-entry program

Canadian Blood Services tests every whole blood donation for the following:
- Human immunodeficiency virus 1 and 2 (HIV)
- Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C virus (HCV)
- Human T-cell lymphotrophic virus I and II (HTLV)
- Syphilis

Testing involves a two-stage testing process. The first stage, considered a ‘screening stage’, looks for the possible presence of infection. If the screening test shows no reaction, the blood is considered free of infection and no further testing is done. If the screening test is reactive, the donor is deferred – meaning that they are deemed no longer eligible to donate blood. Further testing is then done to determine if the reaction is due to infection in the blood or because of a possible issue with the test.

If the follow-up secondary or confirmatory testing is non-reactive, then the initial reactive screening test result is considered a false reactive (or “false-positive”) test result. Almost all “false reactive” results occur because of an issue with test itself and are not due to infection, and for this reason, the donor might be eligible to donate again!

Canadian Blood Services now has a Health Canada approved “donor re-entry program”. This program allows us to invite blood donors who have previously been deferred for certain “false reactive” or “indeterminate” screening test results to be return to be retested by Canadian Blood Services following a six-month waiting period.

To read more articles, please visit the BloodNotes section of blood.ca