



**Canadian  
Blood  
Services**

BLOOD  
PLASMA  
STEM CELLS  
ORGANS  
& TISSUES

# BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE BLOOD SUPPLY SYSTEM

**What the shift to new donor screening means for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities**

In September 2022, Canadian Blood Services implemented sexual behaviour-based screening in our donation process. This shift effectively removed questions about sexual orientation that prevented many sexually active gay, bi, and other men who have sex with men and some trans people from donating blood. **We now ask all prospective donors the same questions, regardless of sexual orientation or gender.**

This new, more inclusive approach to donor screening is the result of continued advocacy from 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, consultations with patient groups and Canadian and international research that demonstrated to our regulator, Health Canada, that this change was necessary and safe. We are particularly grateful to the many 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities who have worked for years to help maximize inclusion in Canada's blood supply system and who continue to work alongside us today.

Since this change, we've welcomed many new (and returning) donors, like Jake Chevrier, who was able to give blood for the first time in years, this past spring.

**I was so excited for the opportunity to get to see myself in our donors, get to recognize and feel like my community is now part of the work I get to do. Because I know people in our community want to give.**

– Tanner Tuplin



**Jake is pictured with his partner Tanner, a donor care associate at Canadian Blood Services. Jake celebrated becoming eligible to resume donating blood by booking an appointment where his partner was able to do the blood draw.**

Visit [blood.ca/JakeandTanner](https://blood.ca/JakeandTanner) to read the full story

## So, what has actually changed since last fall?

All potential donors are now asked if they've had any new or multiple sexual partners in the last three months.

- If the response is no, and the person meets all other eligibility criteria, they will be able to donate.
- If the response is yes to either of these questions, the person will then be asked if they've had anal sex with any of these partners.
- If the person answers yes – that they have had anal sex with a new or multiple partners in the last three months – they will be asked to wait three months from when they last had anal sex to donate.

In short, anyone (regardless of sexual orientation or gender) who wishes to donate can do so three months after the last time they've had anal sex with a new or multiple sexual partners. The three-month wait is in place to reduce the risk of any very recently acquired infections not being detected on screening and further tests.

## Have screening processes improved for trans, non-binary and/or gender diverse donors?

Since the implementation of these donor screening changes, trans and gender diverse donors are no longer asked about gender-affirming surgeries during the donation process and trans donors with a binary gender are no longer registered in their sex assigned at birth.

However, the process to register non-binary and gender diverse donors still has limitations. The international software system we use is binary, and non-binary donors are still asked to register in their sex assigned at birth. Canadian Blood Services is actively working on short- and longer-term changes to our registration and screening processes to ensure people no longer experience deadnaming or misgendering while trying to donate.

## Can people who take PrEP donate?

PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis is a highly effective course of medication that prevents HIV infection by the person taking it, and its use is recommended to maintain sexual health. There is currently a four-month deferral period in place for people who use PrEP.

The challenge facing blood operators worldwide, is that medications used for PrEP affect the ability of available tests to detect low levels of HIV. Canadian Blood Services relies on accurate performance of HIV tests as part of its multi-layered approach to safety.

We are currently working with external experts in HIV testing to further understand the impact of antiretroviral medications on tests and determine how to minimize the duration of deferral for donors using PrEP.

## What about condom use?

Condom use is not included in our donor screening questionnaire. Research has shown that questions regarding condom use are less reliably answered and there are factors that may affect their efficacy (i.e., they can break, slip or leak).

## Is Canadian Blood Services doing anything else to advance 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion?

We've made organizational commitments to advance and champion 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and have implemented several actions to date, including:

- Establishing a 2SLGBTQIA+ advisory committee with representatives from diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ civil society organizations.
- Establishing and supporting the growth of employee resource groups for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, racialized employees, employees with disabilities, and women and non-binary employees.
- Delivering training (developed in collaboration with queer consultants) to employees on how to have sex-positive conversations with donors and colleagues.
- Building and resourcing a diversity, equity and inclusion team to advance our efforts to foster organizational inclusion.

Visit [blood.ca/SBBS](https://blood.ca/SBBS) to learn more.

## Don't see your question answered here?

Share your feedback and questions with us:



[engage@blood.ca](mailto:engage@blood.ca)



Or use the camera app on your mobile device to **scan the QR code**.

We are committed to engaging with and continuing to act on feedback and experiences shared by people from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, to ensure our donor centres and workplaces are as inclusive and welcoming as possible.

