**Facts about Blood Donation**

**Types of Blood Donors**

**Voluntary Donors**: These are the donors who come to donate blood of their own free choice without any coercion. At present, 60% of blood donors are voluntary in Mauritius.

**Replacement Donors**: These are the donors who come to replace blood used by their family or friend. The number of replacement donors has decreased from 75% to 40% in the last four years.

**Blood Donated each year**
The number of units donated is going up steadily over the past few years. In 2001, 31000 units of whole blood were donated. 30% of these units were separated into multiple components such as red blood cells, platelets, Fresh Frozen Plasma and cryoprecipitate. These separated components are transfused to different individuals, each with different needs.

**Who are our blood donors?**
Less than 3% of the healthy Mauritians eligible to donate blood actually do so. The males between the age of 25-35 far outnumber females as blood donors. Presently only 10% of blood donors are females.

**Who can donate blood?**
All healthy Mauritians between the age of 18-60 years are eligible to donate blood. Parental consent is required for someone wishing to donate below the age of 18 but donations are not accepted from children below the age of 16 even with parental consent. For those who are above 60, and wishing to donate blood can do so with the consent of the medical doctor responsible for blood collection.

All donors must weigh more than 45kg and must pass physical and health history examination prior to blood donation.

**Who should not donate blood?**
Anyone who has been or is an intravenous drug user (IVDU)
Anyone engaged in homosexual activity
Anyone who has had unprotected sex with casual partners in the last six months
Anyone who has tested positive for HIV, hepatitis B or C
Anyone having cancer.

**Where can you donate blood?**
You can donate blood at hospital blood banks. We also go on mobile blood drives to schools, churches, factories, offices, community and youth centers and clubs to collect blood from voluntary donors. If you can motivate enough people, you could organise a mobile blood drive in your locality, or place of work and we could come to you for blood collection.

**Blood Donation Process**

Donor Registration
Once you have decided to donate blood you are registered as a blood donor. Your name, age, sex, address, telephone number and other details are recorded.

Health History
You are asked to fill up a health questionnaire designed to ask questions which will protect the health of both donor and recipient. In addition to the questions about transfusion transmitted diseases, the prospective donor is also asked questions to determine whether donating blood might endanger his/her health. Depending on the answers given, a donor may be deferred temporarily or permanently from donating blood.

**Physical Examination**

A brief physical examination is carried out which includes checking blood pressure, pulse, temperature and a hemoglobin screen. The latter is done to ensure that the donor is not anemic.

**Blood Donation**

Once the donor has successfully passed all the above steps, he/she proceeds to the actual whole blood donation process. This takes from 10-20 minutes. The donor is made to lie on a couch or reclining chair and skin on the inner part of the front of elbow joint is cleaned. The vein is identified and a sterile needle connected to the tubing of a plastic blood bag is inserted to draw blood. The donor is asked to squeeze his hand repeatedly to facilitate blood flow. Normally 400-420ml of blood is drawn in the blood bag. A sample of blood is also taken into two pilot tubes for laboratory testing.

**What happens after donation?**

The donor is asked to rest for some sometime following blood donation and is usually served some light refreshment (tea/juice/biscuits). He/she is advised not to engage in heavy work and drink plenty of fluids. People working as airline pilots, firefighters, deep sea divers are advised not to work for the next 24 hrs.

**What happens when a donor is deferred?**

People who are disqualified from donating blood are called deferred donors. Deferral may occur at any point during collection of blood or testing. A person may be deferred temporarily or permanently depending on the reason for disqualification. Deferral may be temporary, e.g. due to anemia or infection, and the donor is eligible to give blood once the condition for deferral has been removed. A donor may be deferred permanently under certain circumstances, e.g. if donor has tested positive for HIV antibodies. In such situations the donor is not eligible to donate blood again.

**What happens to the blood once it is donated?**

All the donated blood is brought to Blood Transfusion Service, Candos where it is tested, processed, stored and distributed for use in various hospitals and private clinics.