

Children who donate blood or marrow need more support

Children who understand the process have better quality of life



Blood or marrow transplant (BMT) can save the lives of children who have cancer and other serious diseases. Often, the best match is the patient's sibling, who is also a child.

Researchers wanted to know whether child donors, aged 5 to 17, have good quality of life. Researchers interviewed about 500 people who were part of families involved in BMT—child donors, patients, parents, and siblings. Researchers asked about physical health, emotions, social relationships, and school performance.

While most child donors had a good quality of life, about 1 in 5 donors reported very poor quality of life. Children had worse quality of life when:

- The child or their parent felt worried or sad
- The child didn't understand the process of donation

However, these children felt better than siblings of patients who had unrelated donors. It's possible that children felt good about donating cells to help their ill siblings.

Parents often thought their donor child felt better than the child reported.

How to help child donors:

- Donors should have their own doctor, not the patient's doctor
- The donor also should always be assigned a donor advocate, who should help the child understand what to expect during and after donation
- Parents should request a donor advocate if one is not provided
- The whole family may need emotional support

Keep in mind

This study was not perfect. It looked at how donors felt before donation and not at long-term effects. Also, the research needs to be done with a larger group of donors.

Learn more about

- [Blood stem cell donation](#) at NMDP.org
- More [study summaries](#) at CIBMTR.org
- [NMDP Patient Support Center](#) at NMDP.org or 1 (888) 999-6743

Source

Switzer GE, Bruce JG, Shaw BE, et al. [Factors Associated With Pre-donation Health-related Quality-of-Life Among Pediatric Sibling Hematopoietic Cell Donors: A DonorKids QL Study](#). *Transplantation and Cellular Therapy*. 2026 April 15:S2666-6367(26)00273-3. doi: 10.1016/j.jtct.2026.04.012. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41997298.

About this research summary

CIBMTR[®] (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research[®]) thanks study participants. This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of CIBMTR. CIBMTR is a research collaboration between the Medical College of Wisconsin and NMDP.

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