

Bone Marrow Program

LifeStream is the only blood center in San Bernardino and Riverside counties partnering with the Be The Match Registry, which is operated by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP). Since this partnership in 1988, LifeStream has registered more than 29,000 potential donors to the registry with more than 1800 joining in 2010. Since 1988, LifeStream has facilitated more than 175 marrow donations for patients who do not have matching donors in their families.

Be The Match Registry

Be The Match is a nationwide registry of volunteers willing to donate stem cells to patients with leukemia and other life threatening blood diseases. The registry provides access to 9 million potential donors and through partnerships with international registries they provide additional access to more than 7.5 million donors. Every year, more than 10,000 Americans are diagnosed with life-threatening diseases that can only be cured with a bone marrow transplant from an unrelated donor. These patients do not have a family member who is a suitable donor, and a donation from a volunteer marrow donor is their only hope for survival.

Joining the Be The Match Registry

To join, volunteers must be between the ages of 18-60, willing to donate to any patient in need, and meet health guidelines. Registration involves completing a health history form and giving a swab of cheek cells. The tissue typing results and a donor identification code become a part of the registry. Physicians looking for a matching donor for their patients review a list of possible donors through the registry. Human leukocyte antigen (HLA) testing determines whether a donor and patient are a good match. Because HLA tissue types are inherited, patients are most likely to match someone of their own race or ethnicity. It is very difficult to find an exact match. As more people enroll in the registry, the chance of finding a match for a needy patient improves.

When donors are a potential match for a patient, further typing is required and another cheek swab or blood test is collected to assure the best possible match. A match occurs when one person's tissue type is very similar or identical to another's. The donor is then contacted and given the opportunity to become a stem cell donor.

Donation Process and Follow-Up

If a donor is the best match for a patient, they participate in an information session that provides detailed information about the donation and recovery process, including risks and side effects. If the donor agrees to become a stem cell donor, they are asked to sign a consent form. A thorough physical examination and consultation with a NMDP Collection Center physician is performed to ensure that donating will not pose any risks for the donor or the patient.

If the donor is requested for marrow donation, the marrow is collected under general anesthesia from the pelvic bones using needles. Post-operative discomfort in the pelvic area is generally minimal, usually lasting a few days.

If the donor is requested to donate peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC), they receive daily injections of a drug called Filgrastim for five days before the collection to increase the number of stem cells released into the bloodstream. Stem cells are then collected through an apheresis procedure lasting 4-6 hours. Donor's may experience headache or bone or muscle aches during the Filgrastim injections, but disappear shortly after donation.

After collection, the donor receives follow up calls from our marrow staff on a regular basis. The donor's marrow completely replaces itself within four to six weeks. All medical care and hospital expenses are paid for by the NMDP.

For more information: 909.885.6503