DONATION MYTHS VERSUS FACTS

MYTH: All donations involve surgery.
FACT: The majority of donations do not involve surgery. Today, the patient's doctor most commonly requests a Peripheral Blood Stem Cell donation (PBSC) which is non-surgical.

The other way of donating is marrow donation, which is a surgical procedure. With both types of donation, donors usually go home the same day they donate.

MYTH: Donating is painful and involves a long recovery.
FACT: There can be uncomfortable but short-lived side effects of donating PBSC. Due to taking a drug called filgrastim for five days leading up to donation, PBSC donors may have headaches, joint or muscle aches, or fatigue. These symptoms go away one to two days after donating.

Those donating marrow receive general or regional anesthesia, so they feel no needles or pain during donation. Marrow donors can expect to feel some soreness in their lower back, and may also feel tired or have difficulty walking. Most marrow donors are back to their normal activities in one to seven days.

MYTH: In marrow donation, pieces of bone are removed from the donor.
FACT: No pieces of bone are taken and the bones are undisturbed during marrow donation. Only the liquid marrow found inside the bones is needed to save the patient's life.

MYTH: Donating is dangerous and weakens the donor.
FACT: Though no medical procedure is without risk, there are rarely any long-term effects. The National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) pre-screens all donors carefully, ensuring they are healthy and the procedure is safe for them. The NMDP also provides support and information every step of the way.

Because only a small fraction of the body's life-giving cells are donated, the donor's immune system stays strong and the cells replace themselves within four to six weeks.

MYTH: Donors have to pay to donate.
FACT: Donors never pay to donate. All medical costs are covered by the patient's medical insurance, sometimes with NMDP assistance. Donors are also reimbursed for travel expenses.

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