

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON
CANCER CENTER
BLOOD BANK



INFORMATION FOR BLOOD DONORS

SMALLPOX VACCINATION

PLEASE DO NOT DONATE IF,
in the past 8 weeks, you have been vaccinated for smallpox, or have touched someone else's smallpox vaccination site before it was completely healed

Smallpox vaccination is being carried out in the United States on a voluntary basis for the first time in over 30 years. The current vaccine uses the same virus, vaccinia, which has been used for more than 100 years. The vaccinia virus (the cowpox virus) is closely related to the smallpox virus (variola), so your immune response to vaccinia protects against smallpox infection.

The vaccination site reacts with a small bump about 3-5 days after the vaccination (for people who have never been vaccinated). This bump forms a blister, then a small abscess, reaching its maximum size in about 8-10 days. This abscess scabs over and the scab spontaneously separates from the skin about 14-21 days after vaccination. (Sometimes the scab stays attached for several weeks.) If at all possible, the scab should be left to separate on its own. The vaccination site and the scab contain contagious virus, so it is important to keep the site covered and to dispose of the scab carefully.

The vaccinia virus is not harmful to most healthy persons, but it can be deadly when transmitted to some patients: cancer patients on therapy, HIV/AIDS patients, burn patients, and persons with serious skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, etc. Some complications from the vaccination are eczema vaccinatum (local or systemic vaccinia rash in persons with eczema or other skin problems), generalized vaccinia (rash that resolves on its own), progressive vaccinia (necrosis and spread of virus, often fatal, usually in immunocompromised persons), vaccinia keratitis (accidental infection of cornea) and post-vaccinia encephalitis (rare brain inflammation).

Vaccinia may be transmitted by blood transfusion, although the possibility is rare. If in the past 8 weeks, you have been vaccinated for smallpox, or have touched someone else's smallpox vaccination site before it was completely healed, you will be deferred for two months from the date of your own vaccination, if no complications occur, or from the date of contact with someone else's vaccination site.

YOU CAN NOT GET SMALLPOX FROM DONATING BLOOD

Additional information

You may obtain additional information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's website: <http://www.fda.gov/cber/guidelines.htm>. Or from the Institute of Medicine's website: <http://www.national-academies.org>.