

HEALTH NOTES

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JANUARY: NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR MONTH !!

A blood donation is truly a “gift of life” that a healthy person can give to another who is ill or injured. In less than an hour’s time, a person can donate one unit (“a pint”) of blood that can be separated into individual components and can save multiple lives! For example, from one pint of blood, red blood cells can be used for trauma or surgery patients; plasma, the liquid part of blood, can be given to patients with clotting problems; a third component, platelets, clot the blood when cuts or other open wounds occur, and are often given to cancer and transplant patients; and, anti-hemophilic factor (“AHF”) is also used for clotting factors for persons with hemophilia, a hereditary bleeding disorder.

In a recent study by the National Blood Foundation, more than 5,000 people who were current or past blood donors were asked why they donate blood: nearly 75% said that they give blood to help others. Some said that giving blood makes them feel good about themselves, supports their local communities and hospitals, supports their community culture, and “pays back” society for the times when they or their families have needed blood transfusions in the past.

The need for blood is great – on any given day, approximately 38,000 units of red blood cells are needed! Accident victims, surgery patients, and those receiving treatment for leukemia, cancer, sickle cell anemia or other blood diseases all need blood. More than 26 ½ million units of blood components are transfused every year.

As someone receiving a blood transfusion, it is important that you receive the highest standard of care and the safest blood available. Organizations like the American Red Cross (ARC) and American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) set standards for blood banks and transfusion services, so that people receiving blood products suffer the fewest possible complications (infections spread through blood contact, reactions to blood that is not your “type”) when they receive this life-giving gift.

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions about blood donation:

DOES IT HURT?? You may feel a slight sting in the beginning (when a needle is placed in your vein) but there should be no discomfort during the donation.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING A BLOOD DONOR? Your local blood bank will determine the exact requirements, but generally, you must be at least 17 years of age, at least 110 pounds, and in good health.



ARE BLOOD DONORS PAID? No, blood collected for transfusion in the USA is given by volunteer donors.

DO I HAVE ENOUGH BLOOD IN MY BODY TO DONATE? Yes, the body contains 10 to 12 pints of blood and your donation is only one pint.

CAN I GET AIDS OR HEPATITIS FROM DONATING? No, there is no risk of getting AIDS or any other disease by donation (each collection kit is sterile and used only once). But if you have AIDS or other bloodborne disease, a person receiving your donated blood may get that infection. That’s why blood bank staff must ask so many questions about your health, lifestyle and disease risk factors before accepting your blood (all of this information is confidential).

HOW OFTEN CAN I DONATE? You may donate “whole blood” once every 56 days (eight weeks). If only certain cells are taken from your body (e.g., platelets), you may donate more often. That’s because platelets will return to normal levels within about 3 days of donating; plasma (liquid portion of blood) returns to normal levels in a couple of days; red blood cells (the oxygen-carrying cells) take about two weeks to reach their normal levels after donation.

DOES DONATED BLOOD “KEEP” INDEFINITELY UNTIL IT IS USED? No, different components of blood can be kept for different periods of time: some can be frozen for up to 10 years, while others must be transfused within 24 hours of donation. This is why we ask healthy donors to donate repeatedly throughout the year!

WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON BLOOD TYPE? The approximate distribution of blood types in the USA is as follows (may vary for specific racial/ethnic groups):

O positive	38%	B positive	9%
O negative	7%	B negative	2%
A positive	34%	AB positive	3%
A negative	6%	AB negative	1%

(In an emergency anyone can receive type O blood cells and type AB individuals can receive any “ABO type”; so people with type O blood are called “universal donors” and those with type AB blood are called “universal recipients”)

For more information, call your local ARC offices or go to <http://www.aabb.org>

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