

Facts About...

Blood Donation

What's so important about donating blood?

A continuous supply of blood is essential to meet the needs of patients in area hospitals, and a steady stream of donors is necessary to meet that need. Blood is only available through the generosity of volunteer donors. It is estimated that 95% of the population will use blood or a blood component by the age of 75 - unfortunately, less than 5% of the eligible population actually donates.



Who needs blood transfusions?

A wide variety of patients receive blood transfusions. The various components of donated blood are used to treat different conditions. For example, red blood cells are transfused to patients who have lost blood due to trauma or surgery, and to treat anemia (including sickle cell anemia). Cancer patients need platelet transfusions to replace the healthy cells that are destroyed during chemotherapy and radiation. Burn victims often need plasma transfusions to treat them for shock.

In The Blood Center's laboratory, whole blood is separated into its components, so your donation can save up to three lives!

Who can give blood?

Almost anyone who is healthy, at least 16 years old, and weighs at least 110 pounds. (16-year-olds must weigh at least 130 lbs and need signed parental consent.)

What are the steps to being a donor?

- A brief health history is taken.
- A donor tech takes your blood pressure, temperature and pulse.
- A drop of blood is taken to measure your blood's iron content.
- If the staff determines that you are eligible to donate, you move to the donation area and donate blood.
- After your donation, you are served refreshments to help replenish fluids.

The entire process takes less than an hour. The actual donation takes about ten minutes.



How much blood is drawn? Is it safe for my body to lose that much blood?

One pint. The average person has 10-12 pints, so the small loss is easily afforded. The fluid (plasma) is replaced within 24 hours. The red cells take about five weeks. You can donate again in eight weeks!

Is donating blood safe?

Absolutely. Blood donation conditions are sanitary, and needles are sterile and disposable.

What should I do to prepare for donating?

Eat a well-balanced meal, free of fatty or fried foods. A diet that regularly includes the following foods will help promote red cell regeneration, boosting your iron levels.

Beet greens	Ham	Sardines
Chard	Iron-fortified cereal	Scallops
Chicken or Turkey	Lean beef or pork	Shrimp
Clams	Liver or liver sausage	Spinach
Dried apricots or peaches	Molasses	Tuna
Dried beans or peas	Oysters	Veal
Enriched bread	Prunes or prune juice	Wheat germ
Eggs	Raisins or dates	Whole-grain bread



How will I feel after donating? What activities can I do after my donation?

Most donors feel fine after donating. Remember to eat a healthy meal afterwards and drink plenty of fluids. You can continue your normal routine, but avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise for 12 hours.

What happens to my blood after I donate?

It is tested in the lab and your blood type is determined, then it is labeled, properly stored and distributed to local hospitals where it is transfused as needed. Red blood cells last for 42 days, platelets for only five days.

What are the components and their usage?

Red cells: carry oxygen to the tissues

Plasma: fluid portion, often used for burn patients

Platelets: help blood to clot

Cryoprecipitate: treats hemophilia

What are the major blood types?

Your blood type is determined by the antigens it contains. There are two major types of blood antigens: ABO and Rh, which combine to create blood types:

O+, O-, A+, A-, B+, B-, AB+ & AB-

Who can receive my blood?

A patient can receive blood that has the same ABO antigens as theirs, plus O. Rh+ can receive Rh+ or Rh-, while Rh- must receive Rh- blood.

Red Blood Cell Matching

