

Facts About...

First-Time Donors

Imagine Saving a Life

Donating blood takes less than an hour of your time. It's easy to do, nearly painless, and you can give blood up to six times a year. Yet less than five percent of the people who are able to give blood actually do—and most of them only give once a year.

That's why The Blood Center works hard to recruit new blood donors. Because right now there are patients in hospitals throughout southern Louisiana and southern Mississippi who need your help!

Your blood drive will be an opportunity for many to roll up their sleeves for the first time. People who haven't donated before may be hesitant simply because they don't know how easy and safe giving blood is. With every blood donation, you can help save three lives—premature babies, children and adults with cancer, surgery patients, and victims of traumatic injury—people like the ones in your neighborhood, school, or even your own family.

Fact: 90 percent of first-time donors give at blood drives.

Fact: The most common reason people give for *not* giving blood is that they have never been asked.

Preparing for your blood donation appointment:

It's easy to share your good health through blood donation. These steps will help you prepare for your donation and ensure the best possible experience:

1. Get a good night's sleep.
2. Eat a healthful meal at least one hour before donating.
3. Be well hydrated before your donation.
4. Make sure you bring verification of your identity - a driver's license or government-issued ID card showing your name and birthdate.

Fact: Most people 17 and older (16 with parental consent), who weigh at least 110 pounds and are in good general health can donate every eight weeks.

Fact: The whole donation process usually takes less than one hour.

Donation Process:

Giving blood is quick, easy and safe:

1. Read the Blood Donor Educational Materials before registering;
2. Complete a health history questionnaire;
3. A professional collection staff member conducts a medical history interview and a brief health check of blood pressure, pulse, temperature and blood iron level;
4. Relax on a donor bed while a unit (about one pint) is collected by specially trained staff. The actual donation takes less than ten minutes.
5. Drink plenty of fluids after your donation. Enjoy some yummy cookies, too!

Fact: Most people feel just a pinch when the needle is first inserted and nothing during the rest of the donation.

Fact: Only sterile, disposable equipment is used for each donation. You cannot get AIDS or any other disease by donating blood.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. *Why should I donate blood?*

A. 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.

Q. *Do I need an ID to donate?*

A. Yes. TBC cannot take your donation without proper identification. Photo IDs must be issued by state, school or U.S. government (passport, military ID, residential alien ID, green card or work visa).

Q. *How long does the donation take?*

A. The entire whole blood donation process, from registration to post-donation refreshments, takes less than an hour. The actual blood draw takes 5 to 10 minutes. Automated donations take a little longer.

Q. *What will happen when I donate blood?*

A. You will be asked to provide some basic information (name, address, birthdate, etc.) as well as answer a number of health history questions on a registration form. Then you are given a mini-physical that includes your temperature, hemoglobin level, and blood pressure to determine your donor suitability.

Q. *How much blood is taken?*

A. A unit (about one pint) of blood is drawn. This procedure takes about 5 to 10 minutes. The average person has between 10 to 12 pints of blood in his/her body. The blood volume lost during donation is replaced by the body within 24 hours. In about a month, the body will have replaced all of the red cells as well.

Q. *How will I feel after I donate?*

A. Most people feel fine after giving blood. A unit of blood (500ml) is less than a pint, and the average adult body contains 10 to 12 pints of blood. Your body makes new blood constantly, and the fluid you give will be replaced within hours. Eating a meal within a few hours before giving will help you with the donation. Drinking water and juices before and after giving also helps your body replenish lost fluids. You should avoid alcohol before and after giving. Strenuous activity should be avoided for 12 hours after giving. If you have a hazardous or strenuous job, you should give at the end of your work shift. Smokers should refrain from smoking 30 minutes after giving.

Q. *How often can I donate blood?*

A. You can safely donate whole blood every 8 weeks, autologous red cells every 16 weeks, and platelets every 2 weeks (up to 24 times each year).

Q. *What happens to my blood after it's donated?*

A. All donated blood, even donations from repeat donors, is tested for blood type, hepatitis, HIV, syphilis, and other transmissible diseases. Blood is separated into various components (red cells, platelets and plasma).

Q. *Will donating blood hurt?*

A. The needle insertion feels like a little pinch—other than that, most donors feel no discomfort.

Q. *Do I have enough blood to spare?*

A. Yes. Most adults have 8 to 12 pints of blood and can easily spare a pint. Volume is replaced within 24 hours and red cells are replaced within 4 to 8 weeks after donating.

Q. *Will I find out my blood type?*

A. Yes. After your donation you will be sent a blood donor card with your blood type and cholesterol level printed on it.

Q. *Does The Blood Center pay me for my donation?*

A. No. All TBC blood donors are volunteers. In fact, all blood collected for transfusion in the United States must be from volunteer donors.