

The Importance of Donating Blood

Currently, there is a severe blood shortage that is jeopardizing surgeries and other medical procedures like cancer treatments. In fact, it was reported that in the State of Utah, all nonessential, non-cardiac surgery was postponed at one point.

What is contributing to the severe blood shortage? As the world begins to reopen, patients are starting to return to their doctors, more advanced diseases are being discovered and there is an increase of accidents requiring trauma care.

The Facts About Donating Blood

- **Every 2 seconds**, someone in the U.S. needs blood.
- Blood donations are essential for surgeries, cancer treatment, chronic illness, and traumatic injuries.
- Every day, roughly **36,000 units of red blood cells** are needed in the U.S.
- The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately **3 units**.
- A single car accident victim can require as many as **100 units of blood**.
- According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1.8 million people were expected to be diagnosed with cancer in 2020. Many of them needed blood, sometimes daily, during their chemotherapy treatment.
- Because only 7% of people in the U.S. are **type O negative**, it is always in demand and often in short supply.
- Type **AB plasma** can be transfused to patients of all blood types. Since only 4% of people in the U.S. have AB blood, this plasma is usually in short supply.



Myths About Donating Blood

- **Donating blood takes a long time.** While registration and processing times vary, the actual blood donation takes around 8-10 minutes.

- **You can't donate blood if you're taking medication.** This is only partially true. It's not the medication itself, but the reason for which you were prescribed the medication that could disqualify you from donating blood.
- **It will hurt.** Beyond the initial pinch of the needle and the pressure on your arm from the tourniquet, donating blood does not hurt.
- **You will faint.** It is possible to feel lightheaded or dizzy, but you may need to lie down until you feel better. It might help to remember that you have about 10 pints of blood in your body and donate roughly 1 pint of blood during your donation. Your body can replenish the loss in a short time—matter of hours for some components.
- **You can't donate blood because you just received a COVID-19 vaccination.** According to the Red Cross, there is no deferral time for eligible blood donors who were vaccinated with an inactive or RNA based COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by AstraZeneca, Janssen/J&J, Moderna, Novavax, or Pfizer.
- **You cannot donate blood if you have high blood pressure.** This is not always true. As long as you have a systolic blood pressure lower than 180 millimeters or mercury (mm Hg) and a diastolic blood pressure lower than 100 mm Hg, you can still donate.
- **You cannot donate blood if you have high cholesterol.** This is untrue—neither high cholesterol or cholesterol lowering drugs disqualify you from donating blood.
- **Enough people already donate blood.** Only one-third of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood and only about 3% of these potential donors give blood on a regular basis. Many patients require a specific type of blood which can cause a critical shortage of specific types of blood.

It is easy to donate blood in most areas of the U.S. by going to:

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>