

Answers to Common Concerns About Giving Blood

It is normal to feel nervous before donating blood, especially if you are a first-time donor. Below are answers to common questions and concerns to help you stay informed and put you at ease.

What if I'm afraid of needles?

If you are afraid of needles, you are not alone. Many people avoid donating blood for this reason. Bring a friend with you for support. You can also distract yourself with music or by watching your favorite show on your smart phone or tablet.

Will it hurt?

You might feel a small pinch, but other than that, most donors do not feel any pain or discomfort. If you want extra support during your donation, consider bringing a friend or family member to donate with you!

What if I need my blood later?

After you donate, your body immediately begins replenishing the blood you lost. Typically, blood volume is fully replaced within 48 hours. Red blood cells take between 4 to 8 weeks to be completely replaced. There are rules about how often you can donate, but as long as you follow them, your body will feel normal very quickly after you donate and you will not experience any changes to your daily activities.

I don't know where to donate blood.

There are thousands of blood drives and blood donation centers across the United States. Find one near you and make a donation to save lives.

Is donating blood safe?

Yes! All medical supplies used for your donation, including the needle, are sterilized, used only on you, and thrown away after the donation. You

cannot get any transmissible diseases or viruses, including HIV, by donating blood. If you meet eligibility requirements, you can donate blood without endangering your health or experiencing any harmful effects.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) plays a key role in making sure America's blood supply is safe. The FDA offers guidance and develops regulations for blood donor eligibility, blood donation, and processing. These efforts protect the health of both the donor and the recipient by minimizing the risk of transmitting infectious diseases.

I don't have time to donate blood.

Donating blood can be quick and easy. The entire process takes no more than 1 hour for whole blood donation, but it often takes less time, especially if you have donated before.

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**My little guy
wouldn't
be alive
without blood
donations.”**

—Kaitlin

Will I feel sick after I donate?

Most donors do not feel sick after they donate. Some donors may experience mild dizziness, lightheadedness, fatigue, bruising, bleeding, or pain, but these should go away fairly quickly. It can help to rest, eat a snack, and drink fluids in the recovery area after you donate. You should also refrain from strenuous activity for at least 4 hours and be sure to stay hydrated for the next 48 hours by drinking plenty of water.

I have a medical condition and I'm unsure if I'm eligible to donate.

There are some restrictions, but many people can donate even if they have a medical condition. Learn more about donor eligibility here.

Can I give blood if I have received a blood transfusion?

You can donate blood 3 months after receiving a blood transfusion.

Are certain blood types needed?

Blood banks need a diverse supply of blood, and the need for each blood type changes daily. Also, blood types vary and can be more or less common in certain racial and ethnic groups. When a wide range of people donate, more lives can be saved.

There are eight types of blood: A+, A-, B+, B-, O+, O-, AB+, and AB-. People with O- are called universal donors because everyone can receive their blood. People with AB+ blood are called universal recipients because they can safely receive any blood type. Besides O- and AB+, only certain blood types are compatible with others, so it is important that everyone donates regularly.

Can I give blood if I received a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. If you received an inactivated or RNA based COVID-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca, Janssen/Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Novavax, or Pfizer, you can donate blood as long as you are feeling well. Some people experience COVID-19-like symptoms, such as fever, rash, or body aches, after being vaccinated. If you are one of those individuals, you will need to wait until you feel better. If you received a live attenuated COVID-19 vaccine or do not know what type of COVID-19 vaccine you received, you must wait 2 weeks before giving blood.

At your donation appointment, you will be asked to provide the manufacturer name, so bring your vaccination card with you.

Can I give blood if I had COVID-19?

It depends. If you tested positive for COVID-19, but do not have symptoms, you are eligible to donate blood 10 days after the positive test result. If you tested positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms, then you must wait to donate blood until you are symptom-free for at least 10 days. If you had COVID-19 and were hospitalized, you may have received a COVID-19 treatment that will require you to defer your donation. For example, if you received a blood transfusion or convalescent plasma, you cannot donate for 1 year.

Did you know?

Your body makes about 2 million new red cells every second.¹



Find a donation center near you and make an appointment to save a life today.
Visit hhs.gov/giveblood/locator.

1 - U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2021, October). Red Blood Cell Production - Health Video: Medlineplus medical encyclopedia. MedlinePlus. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvid-eos/000104.htm>

