



Be A Hero Donor Guide
Help patients in need.



**American
Red Cross**



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I. Introduction

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. When a patient receives blood, it was given in advance by a generous donor. Despite the constant need, for the past four years, new and returning Red Cross blood donors declined by about 80,000 each year.

Hospitals and patients are in constant need of blood donors. Every day, blood donations help patients of all ages: accident and burn victims, heart surgery and organ transplant patients, and those battling cancer. The list goes on. Giving blood means giving hope and courage to patients anxiously awaiting the chance to live healthy, full lives.

You are needed to give blood! Even if you traveled abroad recently or if you have a tattoo, you are likely still eligible to donate blood. We answer the most frequently asked donor questions in this donor guide, so you can be informed to schedule your appointment to give blood.

Schedule to donate here:

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

II. Donation “Myths”

Myth Buster #1: So, what are the facts about tattoos and giving blood?

How long do I have to wait to give blood after getting a tattoo?

In most states, you may be eligible to give blood immediately after getting ink as long as the tattoo was applied by a state-regulated entity using sterile needles and ink that is not reused.

Are there any states where I can't give blood after getting ink?

Currently, the only states that DO NOT regulate tattoo facilities are Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wyoming, as well as the District of Columbia.

This doesn't mean you can't give blood, just that you might have a deferral period. Potential donors should discuss their particular situation with the health historian at the time of donation through the Red Cross.

What if I got my tattoo in one of the states that doesn't regulate tattoo facilities?

While your tattoo may be permanent, the deferral isn't. If your tattoo was applied in one of the 11 states that do not regulate tattoo facilities, you must wait 12 months before donating blood. This requirement is related to concerns about hepatitis. [Learn more about hepatitis and blood donation.](#)

To learn more about eligibility criteria for donating blood, visit [redcrossblood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

So, roll up a sleeve, show us your ink and give the gift of life.

Myth Buster #2: I take medications or use medicinal cannabis, can I still donate?

Most medications will not disqualify you from being able to donate blood but may require a waiting period after your final dose.

As long as your condition is under control and you are healthy, blood donation is usually permitted. Over-the-counter oral homeopathic medications, herbal remedies, and nutritional supplements are acceptable. There are a handful of drugs that are of special significance in blood donation, so be sure to share this information during your health review. You can call ahead to speak to a Red Cross representative by dialing: 1-866-236-3276.

Myth Buster #3: My blood pressure and cholesterol are higher than they should be. And my iron levels are low. Will donating blood make my symptoms worse? Will my iron levels impact my donation?

High blood pressure during blood donation is acceptable as long as your blood pressure is below 180 systolic (first number) and below 100 diastolic (second number) at the time of donation. Medications for high blood pressure do not disqualify you from donating.

If you were unable to donate due to low iron, you may still be able to donate in the future. The Red Cross recommends taking steps to help increase your iron level.

Myth Buster #4: If I traveled to another country outside the U.S., does that prevent me from donating?

You may be deferred from donating blood or platelets if you have lived in or traveled to a malaria-risk country in the past three years. Also, people who have spent long periods of time in countries where “mad cow disease” is found are not eligible to donate. This requirement is related to concerns about variant Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease (vCJD) Learn more here:

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/faq.html#eligibility-travel>

Myth Buster #5: I heard that donating blood can be painful. Is this true?

Some people may experience different levels of discomfort during their blood donation. Our trained and experienced staff will work to ensure you are as comfortable as possible during your donation visit. When you donate blood, you give more life—and that outlasts any temporary pain during your donation. So, just try to stay focused on all of the life-saving benefits your donation will bring!

Are you ready and eligible to donate? Schedule your appointment by visiting <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>

III. Donation Requirements

Requirements by Donation Type

To ensure the safety of both patients and donors, these are some of the requirements donors must meet based on their donation type. If you qualify, schedule an appointment to donate by calling 1-800-RED CROSS or visiting: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>

Whole Blood Donation

- Donation frequency: Every 56 days*
- You must be in good health and feeling well**
- You must be at least 16 years old in most states
- You must weigh at least 110 lbs

Power Red Donation

- Donation frequency: Every 112 days, up to 3 times/year*; 2 times/year for male donors under age 18
- You must be in good health and feeling well**
- **Male donors**⁺ must be at least 17 years old in most states, at least 5'1" tall and weigh at least 130 lbs
- **Female donors**⁺ must be at least 19 years old, at least 5'5" tall and weigh at least 150 lbs

Platelet Donation

- Donation frequency: Every 7 days, up to 24 times/year*
- You must be in good health and feeling well**
- You must be at least 17 years old in most states
- You must weigh at least 110 lbs

AB Elite Plasma Donation

- Donation frequency: Every 28 days, up to 13 times/year*
- You must have type AB blood
- You must be in good health and feeling well**
- You must be at least 17 years old
- You must weigh at least 110 lbs

** If more than one type of donation type is made, the number of allowable donations per year will be lowered due to red cell and plasma loss limit guidelines. Final eligibility will be determined by the American Red Cross at the time of donation.*

*** Healthy means that you feel well and can perform normal activities. If you have a chronic condition such as diabetes, healthy also means that you are being treated and the condition is under control. If you are not feeling well on the day of your donation, please contact us to reschedule.*

+ Please note higher requirements may apply in certain cases. Check with your donor center to confirm.

Facts About Blood Needs

Every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs blood. It is essential for surgeries, cancer treatment, chronic illnesses, and traumatic injuries.

Whether a patient receives whole blood, red cells, platelets or plasma, this lifesaving care starts with one person making a generous donation.

- Approximately 36,000 units of **red blood cells** are needed every day in the U.S.
- Nearly 7,000 units of **platelets** and 10,000 units of plasma are needed daily in the U.S.
- Nearly 21 million **blood components** are transfused each year in the U.S.
- The average **red blood cell** transfusion is approximately 3 pints.
- The blood type most often requested by hospitals is **type O**.
- **Sickle cell disease** affects 90,000 to 100,000 people in the U.S. About 1,000 babies are born with the disease each year. Sickle cell patients can require **blood transfusions** throughout their lives.
- According to the American Cancer Society, about 1.7 million people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in 2017. Many of them will need blood, sometimes daily, during their chemotherapy treatment.
- A single car accident victim can require as many as 100 pints of blood.

How will your blood donation be put to use?

The Red Cross provides about 40% of our nation's blood and blood components, all from generous volunteer donors. But supply can't always meet demand because only about 10% of eligible people donate blood yearly. Each new donor helps us meet patient needs.

- Each year, an estimated 6.8 million people in the U.S. donate blood.
- 13.6 million whole blood and red blood cells are collected in the U.S. in a year.
- About 45% of people in the U.S. have Group O (positive or negative) blood; the proportion is higher among Hispanics (57%) and African Americans (51%).
- Type O negative red cells can be given to patients of all blood types. Because only 7% of people in the U.S. are type O negative, it's always in great demand and often in short supply.
- Type AB positive plasma can be transfused to patients of all blood types. Since only 3% of people in the U.S. have AB positive blood, this plasma is usually in short supply.
- Red blood cells must be used within 42 days (or less).
- Platelets must be used within just 5 days.