

Blood Donation FAQs

Provided by America's Blood Centers

Is it safe to give blood?

Yes. Donating blood is safe. The supplies used to collect your blood are sterile and only used once.

I'm taking medications. Can I still donate blood?

Many medications are acceptable. Consult your physician to be sure you're healthy enough to donate and ask your community blood center medical staff if you have questions about your eligibility to donate. Do not assume you're not eligible without inquiring.

Will travel abroad make me ineligible to donate?

Travel to certain countries may prevent you from donating blood. Check with your blood center if you have questions about these common travel-related deferrals:

Destination	Risk	Possible Deferment Period
Central and South America Africa, Asia	Infectious diseases including malaria and chagas	One to three years
United Kingdom (Total three months or more, 1980-1996)	The FDA seeks to prevent transmission of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) through the blood supply. Donors are at a very low risk of developing vCJD from eating beef from the U.K., but there is a risk of transmitting vCJD through blood transfusion.	Indefinite
Rest of Europe (Total of five years or more between 1980-present)	The FDA seeks to prevent transmission of the disease vCJD through the blood supply. Donors are at a very low risk of developing vCJD from eating beef imported to Europe from the U.K. or from locally produced beef, but there is a risk of transmitting vCJD through blood transfusion.	Indefinite

<p>Europe (Total six months or more, 1980-1996)</p>	<p>The FDA seeks to prevent transmission of the disease (vCJD) through the blood supply. Donors are at a very low risk of developing vCJD from eating beef supplied to U.S. military bases from the U.K., but there is a risk of transmitting vCJD through blood transfusion.</p>	<p>Indefinite</p>
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Will recent vaccinations make me ineligible to donate blood?

Recent vaccinations may prevent you from donating blood. Flu vaccines do not make you ineligible, If you are unsure, contact your blood center and ask!

How long does it take to give blood?

The process for whole blood donation usually takes about one hour with the collection itself usually lasting only about 10 minutes. Expect to spend about two hours for an apheresis platelet collection. The donation process includes registration, a brief medical screening, blood collection, and refreshments.

How much blood do I have in my body?

Women have about 10 pints, and men about 12 pints of blood in their bodies.

How much blood is taken?

Whole blood and apheresis (platelet) donations are about 1 pint. One pint is roughly equal to 1 pound.

How often can I give?

You can donate whole blood every 56 days. Red blood cells will return to normal levels within approximately two weeks of donation.

You can donate platelets (apheresis donation) as much as twice in a 7 day period - or up to 24 times in a rolling 12 months. Platelet and plasma components are replaced in the body more quickly than red cells. Platelets will return to normal levels within a few hours of donating. Plasma, the watery substance of your blood, takes a couple of days.

Are there age limits for donors?

Each state sets the minimum blood donor age. You must be at least 16 or 17-years old depending on your state. Some blood centers may have an upper age limit. Please call and check with your local blood center for more information.

What if I am a Jehovah's Witness?

If you have questions regarding blood donation and the Jehovah's Witness faith, please contact the:

Hospital Liaison Committee Network

Hospital Information Services for Jehovah's Witnesses (24-hour service)

25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201; Tel: (718) 560-4300

What is the universal blood type?

Type O negative is the universal donor and can give blood to any other blood type. Only eight percent of the U.S. population has O negative blood.

AB positive is the universal recipient and can receive blood from any other blood type. Only two and a half percent of the U.S. population has AB positive blood.

What is a double red cell donation?

Double red cell donations are performed using an apheresis machine, where the actual donation takes about 30-35 minutes, and allow you to donate two pints of red cells.

How long until my blood is used?

All blood donations are processed and available for use between 24 and 48 hours after collection.

- Whole blood is processed into components (red cells, platelets, plasma). After processing, the red cells can be stored for up to 42 days.
- Plasma can be frozen and stored for up to 12 months.
- Platelets (from whole blood or by apheresis) must be used within five days.

Are the health history questions needed every time?

Yes. Screening questions must be asked of all donors at each donation. This is an FDA requirement.