

A Pinch of Discomfort To Save a Life

Every 3 seconds someone needs blood, according to the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB).

The American Red Cross reports that blood supplies nationwide have reached critically low levels, with less than 1 day's supply in some cases. In fact, those in need could be in grave trouble.

You can help. The process is relatively painless and quick.

Who Can Give?

Most healthy adults can give blood every 56 days (8 weeks). A donor should:

- be at least 17 years old;
- weigh at least 110 pounds;
- be in good health on the day of donation; and
- have no history of exposure to hepatitis or AIDS.

Certain medications, health problems or conditions may disqualify potential donors. For example, pregnant women or those with angina (chest pains) cannot donate blood. For a full list of eligibility requirements, visit www.redcross.org

Does it Hurt?

The American Red Cross offers the following to separate fact from fiction:

Myth: It will probably hurt a lot.

Reality: The truth is, all you'll feel is a slight pinch for a few seconds.

Myth: I'll probably faint if I give blood.

Reality: Most people feel just fine after donating.

Myth: You can get AIDS from giving blood.

Reality: Absolutely not! A brand new sterile needle is used for each donation and then thrown away. Needles are never reused.

Getting Ready

There are several things that the American Red Cross recommends to assure a good donation experience: a good night's sleep, a healthy breakfast or lunch, and plenty of liquids.

What to Expect

Giving blood is simple, safe and takes about an hour. The actual donation takes about 8-10 minutes and is broken down by the American Red Cross into four steps:

1. Health Check — You will fill out a form with your name, address and general health information. This information will not be shared with anyone else.



2. Important Checks — A staff person will measure the amount of iron in your blood (by taking a drop of blood from a finger), and will check blood pressure, pulse and temperature.

3. Actual Donation — Blood is then collected using a sterile needle used only once for your donation. You will feel a slight pinch.

4. Beverages and Snacks — You will then will be asked to relax with beverages and light snacks. This will help your body adjust to the slight decrease in blood. The body replaces that blood within 24 hours.

Tested and Typed

Every unit of blood donated is tested in a laboratory for disease and to determine blood type.

Blood types are A, B, AB and O and are either positive or negative. Type O negative is called the "universal donor" because, in an emergency, it can be given to people with other blood types. Type O positive is the most common blood type.

Who Gets It?

Accident victims, people having surgery, and patients with cancer, or other diseases, all often need blood.

Call for Help

Not enough people donate during summer months and holidays; at a time when the need for blood often increases.

To locate a blood donation center, call:

- American Red Cross 800-GIVELIFE (800-448-3543)
- AABB 866-FROM-YOU (866-376-6968)
- ABC 888-BLOOD-88 (888-256-6388)

Resources:

American Red Cross www.redcross.org; American Association of Blood Banks www.aabb.org or America's Blood Centers www.americasblood.org

The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your health care provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.

