



Blood Donation

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JAMA. 2008;299(19):2350 (doi:10.1001/jama.299.19.2350)

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Blood Donation

Blood is a living tissue made up of blood cells, platelets, and a fluid called **plasma** that contains protein and a number of other components. A **blood transfusion** is the administration of blood or blood components directly into the bloodstream. Every year, more than 4.5 million patients need blood transfusions in the United States and Canada. Someone needs blood on an average of every 2 seconds.

The May 21, 2008, issue of JAMA includes an article about blood donations by 16- and 17-year-olds. This Patient Page is based on one published in the April 17, 2002, issue of JAMA.



WHO NEEDS BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS?

- Persons who have lost blood because of internal bleeding or severe injuries
- Persons who lose blood during surgical procedures
- Certain individuals with cancer, sickle cell disease, and other disorders

WHO CAN DONATE BLOOD?

There are a few requirements for blood donors; however, most individuals are eligible to donate as often as every 8 weeks. To donate, you must

- Be at least 16 or 17 years of age depending on state laws
- Weigh at least 110 pounds
- Be in good health

If you are taking medication, you can usually donate blood; inform the blood donation staff before you donate.

WHO CANNOT DONATE BLOOD?

Individuals may be temporarily or permanently deferred from donating blood. Individuals who are **temporarily deferred** are those who have a short-term condition or circumstance under which donation is not recommended, including

- Low blood cell count
- During pregnancy and until 6 weeks after giving birth
- Having received a tattoo or any body piercing within the past year
- Recent travel to certain areas of Africa, Central or South America, Mexico, or Southeast Asia

If you are temporarily deferred, you can check with your local blood bank to find out when you can donate.

Individuals who are **permanently deferred** should never donate blood. Permanent deferrals in the US include

- Anyone with a positive test for HIV
- Having had hepatitis at age 11 years or older
- High risk of having HIV because of injection drug use or sexual contacts
- Anyone who has ever received clotting factor concentrates
- Anyone who has had babesiosis or Chagas disease
- Anyone who has spent 3 months or more in the United Kingdom from 1980 through 1996
- Anyone who has spent 5 years or more in Europe from 1980 to the present

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WHY DONATE BLOOD?

Give the gift of life! One pint of blood can save up to 3 lives. Less than 10% of eligible individuals actually donate annually. As a result, the blood supply nationwide often runs short, especially around holidays and during summer months.

Donating blood is safe and relatively painless. The entire process takes about 1 hour. You cannot get **HIV** (the virus that causes **AIDS** [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome]), hepatitis, or other diseases from donating blood.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Association of Blood Banks
www.aabb.org
- America's Blood Centers
www.americasblood.org

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. A Patient Page on blood transfusion was published in the October 6, 2004, issue.

Sources: American Association of Blood Banks, America's Blood Centers, American Red Cross

