

Diversifying the Blood Supply: How you can give back to the community and help save a life.

It is vital that the blood supply reflect the diversity of our community to best meet the needs of hospital patients. A diverse blood supply helps ensure that a wide variety of blood types are available for those in need.

Regular blood donations from people of color are essential because blood types O and B are more prevalent in these communities. It is estimated that fifty percent of Blacks and African Americans have Type O blood. Type O negative blood is the universal blood type, which means any patient can receive Type O negative blood in an emergency or trauma situation.

Many hospital patients need regular, ongoing blood transfusions as part of the treatment for diseases that are prevalent in the Black community including lupus, diabetes, prostate cancer and Sickle Cell Disease.

Five percent of the total eligible U.S. population gives blood, and while Black people represent 12-14% of the total U.S. population, less than 1% of the Black community donates blood.

Giving blood is safe, simple and saves lives. It takes about an hour and each donation can save up to three lives. Most healthy people who are at least 17 years old and weigh 110 pounds are eligible to give blood. Because only sterile disposable needles and blood bags are used, it is impossible to contract a disease from donating blood.



**American
Red Cross**

1-800-GIVE LIFE

www.pleasegiveblood.org



The Sickle Cell Donor Program: A special need for donors of African descent.

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell Disease is an inherited blood disorder that causes anemia, lung tissue and organ damage, strokes and terrible pain. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all the parts of the body. Normal red blood cells are soft and round and can squeeze through tiny blood vessels. People with Sickle Cell Disease have red blood cells that are stiff, distorted in shape (like a sickle) and can block small blood vessels. This is what causes the complications of Sickle Cell Disease.

Who Does The Disease Affect?

It is estimated that over 70,000 Americans have Sickle Cell Disease. Ninety percent of all Sickle Cell Disease in the United States occurs in people of African descent.

The Blue Tag and What It Means

Although there is no cure, Sickle Cell Disease can be managed through blood transfusions. African American and Black donors can provide blood that is a better match for patients who suffer from Sickle Cell Disease.

Since children with Sickle Cell Disease often need many blood transfusions, it is best for them to receive blood that very closely matches their own.

When you donate blood, an American Red Cross staff member will place a "blue tag" on your donation. This will ensure your blood goes to a Sickle Cell patient. If a patient with Sickle Cell does not need your blood donation at this time it will not be wasted. It will go to another patient in need.



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