



Blood Services, Penn-Jersey Region  
Musser Blood Center  
700 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19123

*You can save a life*

[www.pleasegiveblood.org](http://www.pleasegiveblood.org)  
**1-800-GIVE LIFE**

## The **25** Most Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Q: Why should I donate blood?**

**A:** The need for blood affects us all. Nine out of ten of us will need blood some time in our lives. And one out of every ten hospital patients requires a transfusion. Although the average transfusion is three pints, some patients require more.

**2. Q: Who may donate blood?**

**A:** Donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds, and not have donated blood within the last 56 days. You must also be in general good health on the day you are donating blood. There are some medical conditions that can keep you from giving blood. The guidelines are set by federal, state and local health agencies (see also question 16).

**3. Q: Is there anything special I need to do before my donation?**

**A:** Please be sure to eat at your regular mealtimes and drink plenty of fluids.

**4. Q: How long does the donation take?**

**A:** The procedure is done by a skilled, specially trained technician and takes seven to ten minutes. You will give a little less than one pint of whole blood. You will rest after the donation and be served refreshments. Plan to spend at least an hour at the blood drive.

**5. Q: How often can I donate?**

**A:** You may donate whole blood every 56 days. However, if you choose another donation type, such as apheresis or double red blood cells, the wait between your donations may vary.

**6. Q: Can you contract HIV from donating blood?**

**A:** No. HIV and other transmissible viruses cannot be contracted through blood donation. The equipment used is sterile and used only once, then immediately discarded, and a new needle is used for each donation.

**7. Q: Does the needle hurt the entire time?**

**A:** There may be a little sting when the needle is inserted, but there should be no pain during the donation.

**8. Q: How will I feel after the donation?**

**A:** Donors who know what to expect and have eaten regular meals before donating are usually fine. After donating, drink extra fluids for the next 48 hours.

**9. Q: What is a unit of blood?**

**A:** A unit of blood is a little less than one pint (approximately 500 milliliters). The average adult has between eight and twelve pints and can easily spare one.

**10. Q: What happens to my blood after donating?**

**A:** After donation, your blood will be tested for blood type, hepatitis, HIV (the AIDS virus), HTLV (human t-cell lymphotropic virus), West Nile Virus, and syphilis. The American Red Cross also tests for antibodies to *T.cruzi* microorganism (Chagas' disease.) Then it can be used either as whole blood for one patient or, after separation into components, to help several patients.

**11. Q: How do I make an appointment to give blood? Where do I go?**

**A:** You can call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or go on the internet and visit [www.pleasegiveblood.org](http://www.pleasegiveblood.org).

**12. Q: Does the Red Cross pay their blood donors?**

**A:** No. Scientific data shows that people who donate blood for altruistic reasons are the safest blood donors. As an extra layer of safety to the blood supply, Red Cross accepts only volunteer blood donors.

- 13. Q: Where does the blood go?**  
**A:** The blood is sent to over 100 hospitals in southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Also, other hospitals may contact us with a special request.
- 14. Q: Can you donate if you have just had a baby or are nursing?**  
**A:** Persons who are pregnant are not eligible to donate. Wait 6 weeks after giving birth. Donors are acceptable if they are nursing, or recently had an elective abortion.
- 15. Q: Can you donate if you have been out of the country?**  
**A:** Wait 12 months after travel in an area where malaria is found. Wait 3 years after moving to the United States after living in a country where malaria is found. Persons 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). Persons who were born in or who lived in certain countries in Western Africa, or who have had close contact with persons who were born in or who lived in certain West African countries are not eligible to donate, a requirement related to concerns about HIV.
- 16. Q: Is there an upper age limit for donors?**  
**A:** You must be at least 17 years old to donate to the general blood supply. There is no upper age limit for blood donation as long as you are well with no restrictions or limitations to your activities.
- 17. Q: Can you donate if you are on high blood pressure medication?**  
**A:** 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.
- 18. Q: Last time I donated blood I was anemic - should I still try to donate?**  
**A:** Each time you donate, your hemoglobin and hematocrit will be tested. Acceptable if you have a hemoglobin at or above 12.5 g/dL. Acceptable if you have a hematocrit at or above 38%.
- 19. Q: What is apheresis?**  
**A:** Apheresis is a type of blood donation. Instead of whole blood, the donor gives only certain parts or components, usually red cells, platelets or plasma.
- 20. Q: How long will it take to replenish the pint?**  
**A:** Your body replaces blood volume or plasma within 24 hours. Red cells need about four to eight weeks for complete replacement. This is why we ask you to wait 56 days between donations.
- 21. Q: What is autologous donation?**  
**A:** An autologous donation is when a patient’s own blood is collected and stored in anticipation of a surgical procedure.
- 22. Q: What kind of identification do I need to donate?**  
**A:** We are not allowed to take your blood donation without first seeing positive identification, such as a driver’s license. It must show proof of age, your signature and/or your photo. Your Red Cross donor card is also acceptable as positive identification.
- 23. Q: What do I get in return for my blood donation?**  
**A:** Blood is immediately prepared for transfusion to patients in hospitals throughout the community. Because blood is typically separated into three components, you get the satisfaction of knowing you have directly helped several people in need. You get a free mini-medical examination including a blood pressure check. You get an identification card showing your blood group and type.
- 24. Q: Does blood differ by race or ethnic group?**  
**A:** Everyone has an ABO blood type and most transfusions can be performed if the ABO types of the donor and patient are compatible, regardless of their races or ethnic backgrounds. However, some people have rare blood types which they have inherited in the same way as their eye and hair color. Often it is a challenge to find that kind of match.
- 25. Q: Is there a substitute for blood?**  
**A:** The human body is the only “manufacturer” of this precious fluid - literally, the “Liquid of Life.” There is no substitute that covers all the needs of human blood transfusion. All the money or insurance in the world is valueless if the right type or quantity of blood is not available in an emergency or needed for surgery. The American Red Cross will continue to collect human blood so that red cell, platelet and plasma transfusions can continue and because real blood is an absolute necessity.