



Memorial Blood  
Centers

MEMBER AMERICA'S BLOOD CENTERS

It's About *Life*.

## BLOOD DONATION FAQs

### **How long does it take to give blood?**

The donation process includes registration, a brief medical screening, the blood collection and time for refreshments. For whole blood the entire donation process usually takes about one hour, and the blood collection portion usually last about 10 minutes. For an apheresis collection, the entire process takes about two hours.

### **How much blood is taken?**

Whole blood donations are approximately one pint. Apheresis donations also take about a pint of fluid.

### **How often can a person give blood?**

Whole blood donors may give once every 56 days, or every two months, in order to allow plenty of time to replenish their red blood cells. Apheresis (platelet) donors can donate more frequently, as much as twice in one week up to 24 times per year, because the platelet and plasma components are replaced in the body more quickly than red blood cells. Platelets will return to normal levels within a few hours of donating. Plasma, the watery substance of blood, takes a couple of days to return to normal levels. The red blood cells can take two weeks or longer to fully return to normal.

### **What are platelets?**

Platelets are tiny cell fragments that circulate throughout the blood and aid in blood clotting.

### **How much blood is in a person's body?**

As a general rule, women have approximately 10 pints and men have approximately 12 pints of blood.

### **Is there an age or weight limit on donating blood?**

The minimum age is 17 years old and donors must weigh at least 110 pounds. There is no upper age limit.

### **Is giving blood safe?**

Yes. Donating blood is a safe, simple and quick procedure. People cannot get any infectious diseases from donating blood. All needles are sterile, used only once and then discarded.

### **Is receiving blood safe?**

Yes. The blood supply is the safest it's ever been, especially since the implementation of nucleic acid testing (NAT) under an FDA-sponsored research protocol. NAT is a highly sensitive, gene-based test, which is used to screen the blood supply for HIV, hepatitis C and West Nile virus. Memorial Blood Centers performs 12 tests on every unit of donated blood. Eleven of those tests, including NAT, are used to screen for infectious diseases, including HIV.

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**What is the universal blood type?**

Type O negative, occurring in about 8 percent of the U.S. population, is the universal donor and can give blood to individuals with any other blood type. AB positive, which occurs in only 2.5 percent of the U.S. population, is the universal recipient and can receive blood from individuals with any other blood type.

**How long until donated blood is used?**

All blood donations are processed and available for use between 24 and 48 hours. Whole blood is processed into components: red cells, platelets and plasma. After processing, the red cells can be stored for 42 days. Plasma can be frozen and stored for up to 12 months and platelets expire after five days.

**Are the health history questions necessary every time?**

To ensure the safest possible blood supply, all screening questions must be asked of all donors at each donation. The FDA requires that all blood centers conform to this practice.

**Are donors paid for giving blood?**

Memorial Blood Centers is fully committed to remaining a volunteer donor-supported organization and does not pay for blood donations. Additionally, FDA regulations do not permit compensation for blood that is used for transfusion purposes as studies have shown that volunteer donors provide a safer blood supply.

**Why are there often blood shortages?**

Memorial Blood Centers strives to maintain an optimum inventory level of a three-day supply. Due to unpredictable demands from trauma incidents the inventory fluctuates hourly.

**Is Memorial Blood Centers affiliated with the American Red Cross?**

No. Memorial Blood Centers is a nonprofit, independent community blood center that has been the sole supplier of lifesaving blood and blood components to area hospitals for more than 55 years. Memorial Blood Centers must collect at least 2,400 units a week to meet the needs of its 36 hospital partners located in the Twin Cities metro, northern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Memorial Blood Centers is part of a national organization of independent blood centers, America's Blood Centers, which provides about half of the nation's blood supply.

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