



**GIVE  
BLOOD**

# You Can Save a Life

**E**ven if you don't wear a cape or hide your face behind a mask, you can still be a superhero by donating just a bit of your time and blood. You flex your crusader muscles up to five times per year.

The American Red Cross estimates that one blood donation can save the lives of up to three people. This means if you begin donating blood at age 17 and do so every 56 days, you could potentially save more than 1,000 lives. Even the best of superheroes would have a tough time matching that feat.

## WHY GIVE? WHY NOT?

There are many reasons people donate their blood. The most popular, according to the American Red Cross, is our natural desire to help others.

There is simply no substitute for blood donation when it comes to meeting the supply needs of hospital patients. And depending on your blood type, you could be an invaluable resource to these medical institutions as they deal with patient emergencies or transfusions that require large supplies of donor blood.

Every type of blood is needed daily to meet patient needs. Common blood types are usually more readily available, while blood banks commonly appeal for donations of less common blood types.

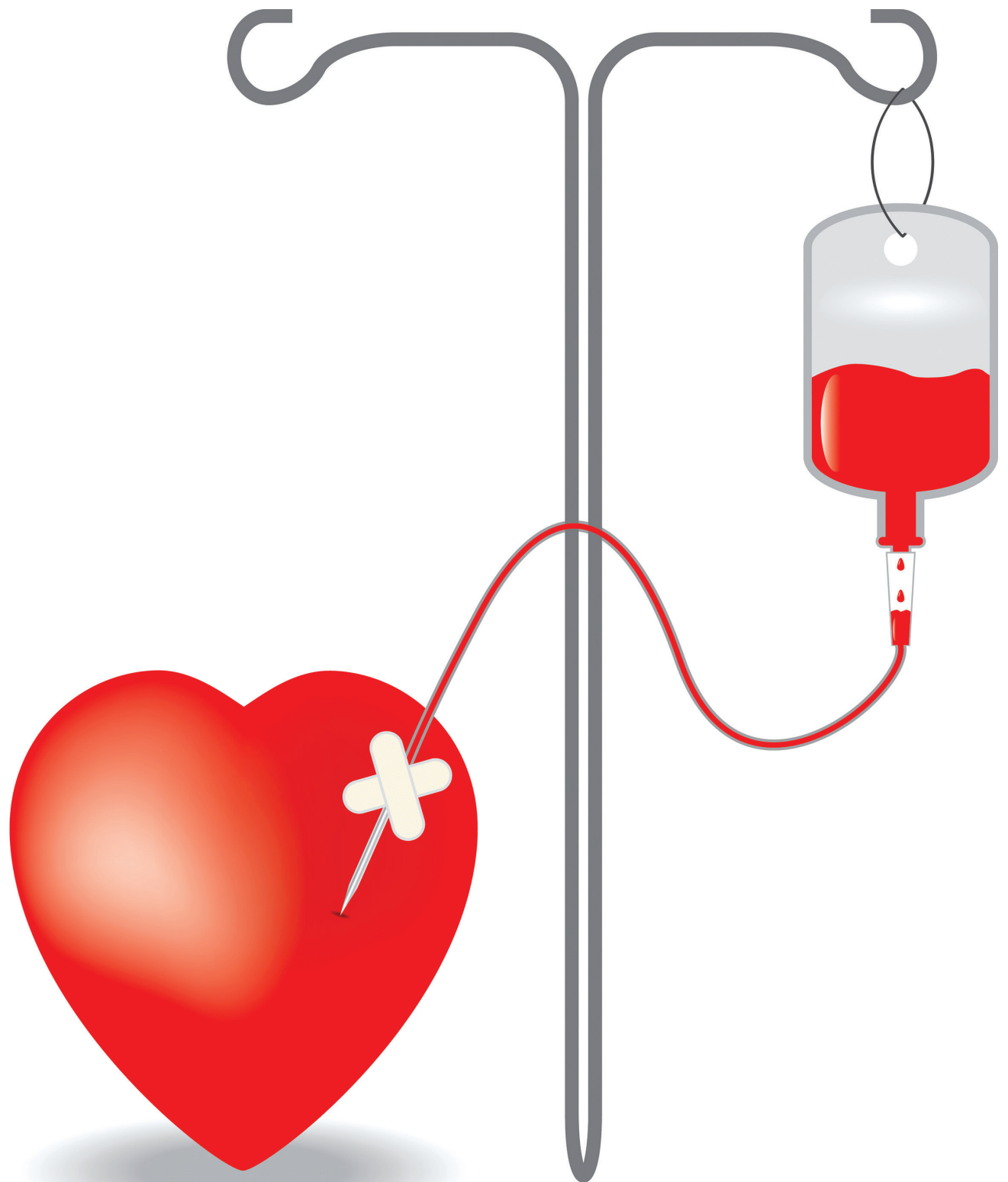
Only 7 percent of people in the U.S. have O-negative blood type, which is the universal type that can be used by any patient. You can have your blood tested to find out your type, which is an important factor to know.

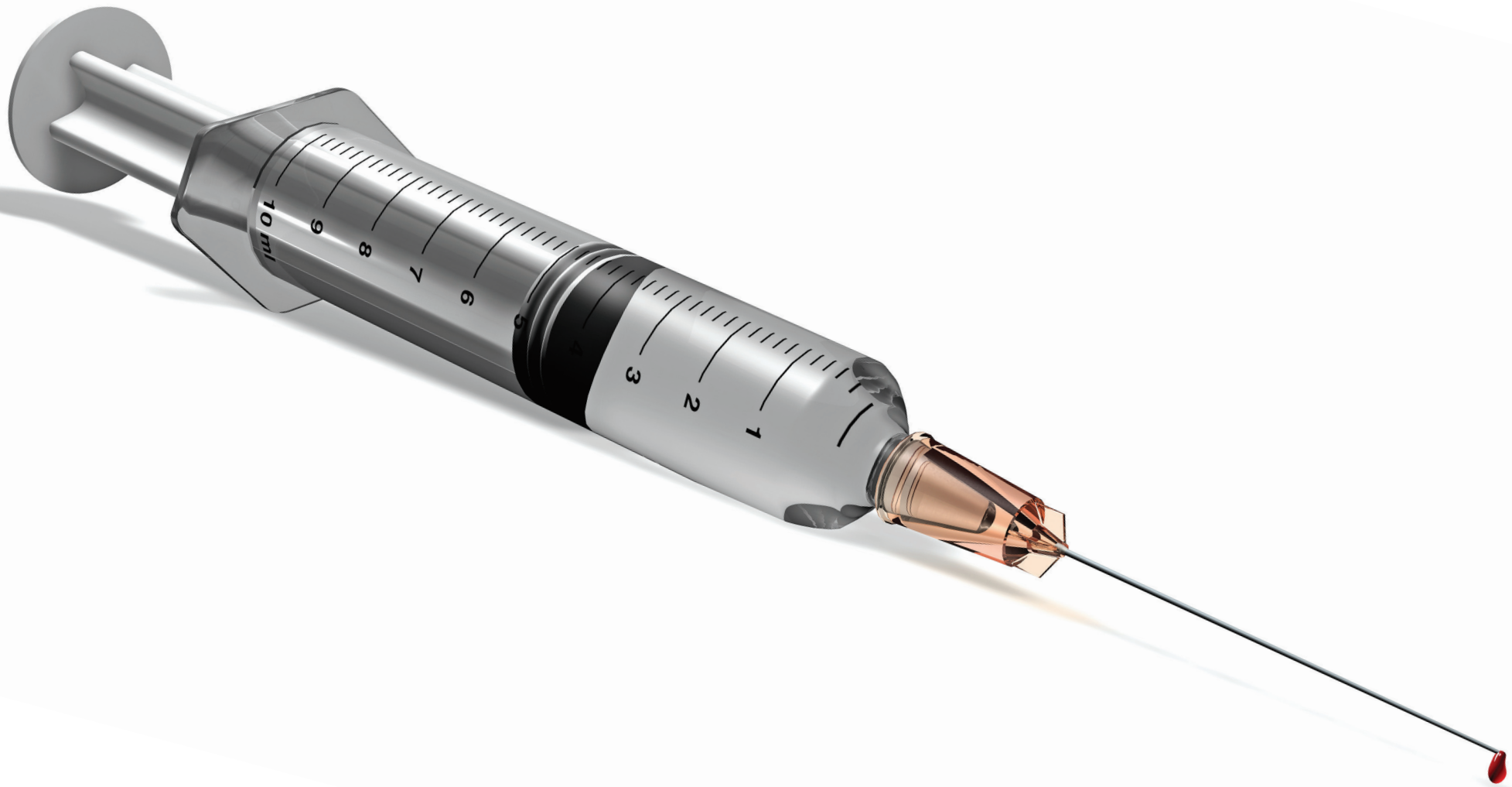
## HOW TO GET STARTED

Despite the research that shows how many lives can be saved by blood donations, many people are still hesitant to lend an arm. Among Red Cross donors in a given year, 19 percent donate occasionally, 31 percent are first-time donors, and 50 percent are regular donors.

The American Red Cross accepts blood donations only from volunteer donors, so keep an eye out for the next blood drive in your area.

For more information or to make an appointment to give blood, visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) or call 800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767).





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# There's No Excuse Not To

**I**'m afraid. I don't like needles. I don't have time. These are among the most typical responses given by those who decline to give blood.

The fact is there is no excuse for not helping your fellow human beings, unless there is a potentially negative effect on your health or the health of others.

If you have doubts about your physical capability to give blood, check with your physician. You also could check with qualified staff members at blood drives if you're interested in donating blood.

Medical professionals will be able to pinpoint any potential issues that may arise while donating your blood.

## **OVERCOME YOUR FEAR**

Many people are uncomfortable

dealing with needles or the fact that they're losing blood from their body. These are natural concerns that affect a large portion of the population.

But consider that you don't really know how giving blood feels until you go through the process. Many donors will tell you that you feel only a slight initial pinch during a draw and are finished in a short amount of time.

For most donors, giving blood should not adversely affect your body.

You will donate less than one pint, and your body should easily be able to replace the blood volume lost to donation within 24 hours, according

to the American Red Cross.

## **TOO BUSY**

The entire process takes about an hour, and the actual blood donation time is only seven to 10 minutes.

What are some things you devote time to during any given day? Talking on the phone? Checking emails? Going for a quick jog?

Now consider the impact you could make by swapping out those 10 minutes for the experience of giving blood.

Your sacrifice could save a newborn or help someone with cancer undergoing chemotherapy. It is an endeavor well worth your time.

# Supply Is Low

**S**till on the rebound after 2012's historically low supply, the American Red Cross is working to improve its base of donated blood.

Everything from inclement weather to busy travel summer seasons can have a negative impact on the number of donors coming forward.

And although an estimated 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate, less than 10 percent actually do each year, according to the American Red Cross.

Other numbers from the Red Cross:

- The American Red Cross works with more than 50,000 blood drive sponsors each year to conduct more than 200,000 blood drives, providing convenient locations for people to give blood.
- The number of blood donations collected in the U.S. in a year: 15.7 million.
- The number of blood donors in the U.S. in a year: 9.2 million.
- American Red Cross provides blood for patients in approximately 2,700 hospitals across the U.S., making blood available to any patients who need it.
- Eighty percent of the blood donations given to the American Red Cross are collected at mobile blood drives set up at community organizations, companies, high

schools, colleges, places of worship or military installations.

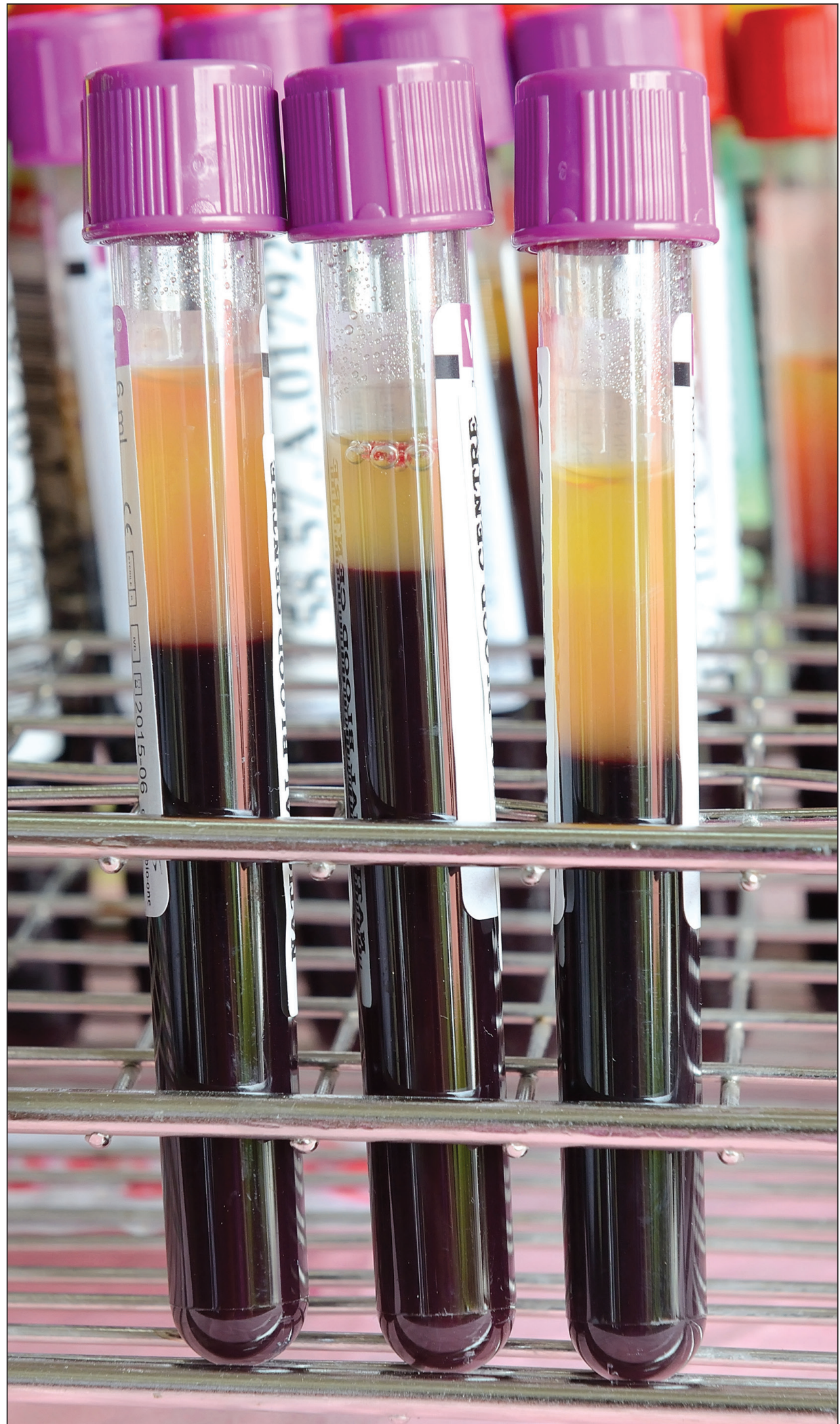
## TRUSTING THE SOURCE

Some people do not donate because they aren't sure of where their blood ends up. The American Red Cross leans on the reputation of its program that was founded in 1940.

It adheres to a simple process to effectively collect, process, test and distribute blood to make sure your contribution is meaningful and put to good use. The testing of your blood is comprehensive, being analyzed in one of three Red Cross National Testing Laboratories.

Tests establish the blood type and check for the presence of infectious diseases. Once your blood is tested, it is labeled and stored in refrigerators to help bolster supply.

Information you give to the American Red Cross during the donation process is confidential. It may not be released without your permission except as directed by law.



# It's Easy

**B**lood is vital for each of us. People in your community and surrounding cities require blood transfusions to recover from surgeries, illnesses and serious accidents.

The American Red Cross makes it easy on you, the donor, to give your blood. You can do so on your own schedule, volunteering as much as and as often as your schedule permits.

You will also enjoy flexible locations and times, and must only meet a few basic requirements to give:

- Be at least 17 years old. Individuals 16 years of age can donate with written permission from a parent or guardian.
- Weigh at least 110 pounds.
- Have no history of HIV or AIDS.
- Allow 56 days between whole blood donations.
- Be feeling well with no sore throat, flu or active allergies.

## BEFORE THE DONATION

Physicians and blood donation professionals recommend that you are well rested and hydrated prior to giving blood. You can achieve this the night before by getting a great night's rest and by drinking plenty of fluids leading up to the donation.

Drinking an extra two to three extra glasses of fluids before you arrive for your appointment is recommended. Food is also important. You should eat a low-fat meal approximately two to three

hours before you donate.

## THE DONATION

The next step is the actual donation, which will begin with you relaxing on a bed and having your blood pressure taken. Next, the inside of your arm at the elbow will be cleaned, prepared and engaged by a needle for the donation.

You should only feel a slight pinch and will be monitored by a qualified phlebotomist to answer any questions you may have during the process.

For every donor, a sterile, single-use needle is used and then discarded, eliminating the chance of contracting AIDS or any other disease by donating blood.

## AFTER THE DONATION

You will be encouraged to drink fluids to help your body replace the fluid volume of the pint of blood you have donated. Most blood donation stations also will offer cookies or other snacks.

Usually you can leave 10 minutes after checking out with a staff member. From your preparation leading up to the donation to the actual process itself, the experience of giving blood is low stress and worth your effort.



# It's Free — and Then Some

Considering how rewarding an experience blood donation can be, it's an added bonus that the process is absolutely free for donors.

You simply donate your time to the cause, an outstanding deal considering the effect your blood can have in your community and beyond. Consider it a charitable contribution that could directly save a life.

And if you give during times that blood is generally in short supply — holidays and the summer months — your donation could have even more of an impact.

Not only is donating blood free to donors, you also can find some drives offering incentives in the form of T-shirts or other promotional items.

It is a practice that is becoming more common and effective, according to some recent research. A team of Johns Hopkins researchers in 2013 reported the positive connection between offering incentives for people to give blood and the number of people who agreed to do so.

The researchers recommended that the World Health Organization and national blood collection agencies reconsider their opposition to economic incentives for donations of blood.

The major claim by the researchers was that economic rewards have a positive effect on donations,

without negative consequences on the safety of the blood.

Here are some highlights of their work:

- The researchers examined incentives for actual blood donors in the United States, Argentina, Switzerland and Italy
- In one study, they examined individual data from nearly 100,000 donors at 72 American Red Cross blood drives in northern Ohio from September 2009 through August 2010. Gift cards were offered at half of the blood-drive sites. No incentives were provided at the other sites.

- They found that an advertised offer of a \$5 gift card increased the likelihood of giving among people with a history of donating by 26 percent; and a \$10 gift card produced a 52 percent rise.

We know that less than 10 percent of eligible Americans choose to give blood. This number is even less in low-income countries, where shortages can have serious negative implications.

The offer of gift cards, T-shirts or other incentives could have a ripple effect, the researchers claim, in creating more referral donations and bringing back past donors who have stopped giving blood.



# It Can Help You Too

**G**iving blood is a selfless act that can literally save the lives of others. But it also can have major positive impacts on your own body.

The American Red Cross identifies the removal of excess iron as the primary benefit to your body. Too much iron, which transports oxygen throughout your body, can harm you if it is deposited in the liver, heart and pancreas.

Excess iron also has been linked to high blood pressure, especially in men who don't donate blood. Donating blood can help regulate the amount of iron in your blood, making you healthier in the process of helping others.

## GET A HEALTH SCREENING

Donors identify another benefit associate with giving blood: getting a free health screening. Every time you donate, you essentially receive a thorough checkup of your resting heartbeat, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. A phlebotomist checks these vital statistics prior to you giving blood.

These mini physicals can catch certain illnesses in the early stages. Many blood centers test blood from donors for numerous diseases including HIV, West Nile Virus, Syphilis and Hepatitis.

Keeping tabs on your blood pressure and cholesterol levels can play a major role in preventing heart disease.



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Additionally, blood donors are 88 percent less likely to suffer a heart attack and 33 percent less likely to suffer any type of cardiovascular event, according to studies published in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

## OTHER BENEFITS

One group of the population that most benefits from regularly giving blood is post-menopausal women. Pre-menopausal women lose iron through menstruation,

cutting down on their risk for heart attacks.

Once a woman goes through menopause her risk of heart attack increases, but donating blood can reduce that risk.

Giving blood also can help

improve your blood flow, helping put less pressure on the lining of your blood vessels. The Loyola University Health System claims that this action can result in fewer arterial blockages and better overall heart health.



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# Follow the Facts

**S**o you've read through this section and you're still not convinced that you can make a difference in the lives of others? Consider these facts from the American Red Cross:

- Every two seconds someone in America needs blood.
- More than 38,000 donations are needed every day in communities across the U.S.
- More than 41,000 blood donations are needed every day.
- A total of 30 million blood components are transfused each year in the U.S.
- The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately 3 pints.
- The blood type most often requested by hospitals is Type O.
- The blood used in an emergency is already on the shelves before the event occurs.
- Patients suffering from sickle-cell disease, which affects more than 70,000 people in the U.S., require frequent blood transfusions.
- More than 1 million people are diagnosed with cancer every year, and many of them will need blood during their chemotherapy treatments.
- A single car accident victim can require as many as 100 pints of blood.