

# G I V E B L O O D





# Before You Give

**G**iving blood is a simple process that requires little effort on your part and has a huge payoff. Yet despite research that shows how many lives can be saved by blood donation, many people are still hesitant to lend an arm.

Consider these facts distributed by the American Red Cross:

- Among Red Cross donors in a given year, 19 percent donate occasionally, 31 percent are first-time donors, and 50 percent are regular donors;
- One blood donation can save the lives of up to three people; and
- If you begin donating blood at age 17 and do so every 56 days, you could potentially save more than 1,000 lives.

When you decided to donate blood, follow the following tips to make sure your body is prepared for the donation.

## **EAT IRON-RICH FOODS**

Eating iron-rich foods can help your body recover faster from the experience of giving blood.

Meat such as beef, lamb, ham, turkey and chicken all serve as great sources of iron, as do seafood options such as shrimp, clams, scallops and oysters. Vegetables fortified with iron include spinach, sweet potatoes, peas, broccoli and collards.

If you're looking for iron in your bread, be sure to consume whole wheat bread, enriched pasta and bran cere-



© FOTOLIA

als. Always remember to eat a healthy meal before your donation. Avoid fatty foods or fries, which can affect the tests performed on your blood.

## **THINGS TO BRING**

The American Red Cross requires its donors to bring a donor card, driver's license or two other forms of identification. This is to ensure proper

record-keeping and biographical information on you for the Red Cross databases.

Other things to remember before heading out the door

include clothing with sleeves that can be raised above the elbow and your favorite assortment of music. The blood donation process can take up to a couple of hours.

# After You Donate

One of the questions people ask about donation is where their blood ends up.

The lifecycle of your blood is fairly straightforward, only following a few simple steps from when you donate to when it is eventually labeled and stored.

Donors can rest assured that professionals from the American Red Cross are fully qualified to handle and process blood within all safety, health and confidentiality standards. If you're still a bit hesitant about the process, reach out to your local Red Cross office for more information regarding your concerns. They will be able to walk you through any concerns you have about the donation process.

## PROCESSING

To begin the process phase of blood donation, your blood is scanned into a computer database and then spun in centrifuges to separate the transfusable components, such as red blood cells, platelets and plasma.

The primary components, such as plasma, can be further manufactured into components such as cryoprecipitate, while red cells go through leuko-reduction. Single donor platelets are leuko-reduced and bacterially assessed before being sent away for intensive testing.

## TESTING

The next step involves your test tubes being shipped to one of three Red



© FOTOLIA

Cross National Testing Laboratories, where a dozen tests are performed on each unit of donated blood. This helps establish the blood type and test for infectious diseases.

If a test result is positive for disease, the unit is discarded and the donor is notified. Test results are confidential and are only shared with the donor, except as may be required by law. Check in with your local Red Cross professionals to learn more about their

policies regarding disclosing blood testing results.

## STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION

Once test results are received, units suitable for transfusion are labeled and stored in refrigerators at 6 degrees Celsius for up to 42 days.

Storage requirements for other materials are as follows, according to the Red Cross:

- Platelets are stored at room tem-

perature in agitators for up to five days; and

- Plasma is frozen and stored in freezers for up to one year.

When it comes to distribution, your Red Cross representative will orchestrate the delivery of your blood in a safe, compliant manner. Your blood could be used for transfusions and other medical emergencies at any time. In fact, blood is available to be shipped to hospitals 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



**O**n the heels of a busy holiday season, there is a reason January is National Volunteer Blood Donor Month. This is the time period that presents the biggest challenge for recruiters.

Schedules are packed. The weather isn't ideal. The flu bug is going around. Whatever the reasons keeping people away from the donor's chair, organizations are focused on making big push in January to remind people of the importance of giving.

Since 1970, January has been recognized as national donor month. The American Red Cross needs about 650 blood donors every day to meet the needs of patients at 41 area hospitals, according to the organization. With a 10 percent dip in donations during the wintertime, this can be an insurmountable task to achieve.

#### **MORE STATISTICS**

According to the Association of Donor Recruitment Professionals, every day in the United States approximately 39,000 units of blood are required in hospitals and emergency treatment facilities for patients with cancer and other diseases, for organ transplant recipients and to help save the lives of accident victims.

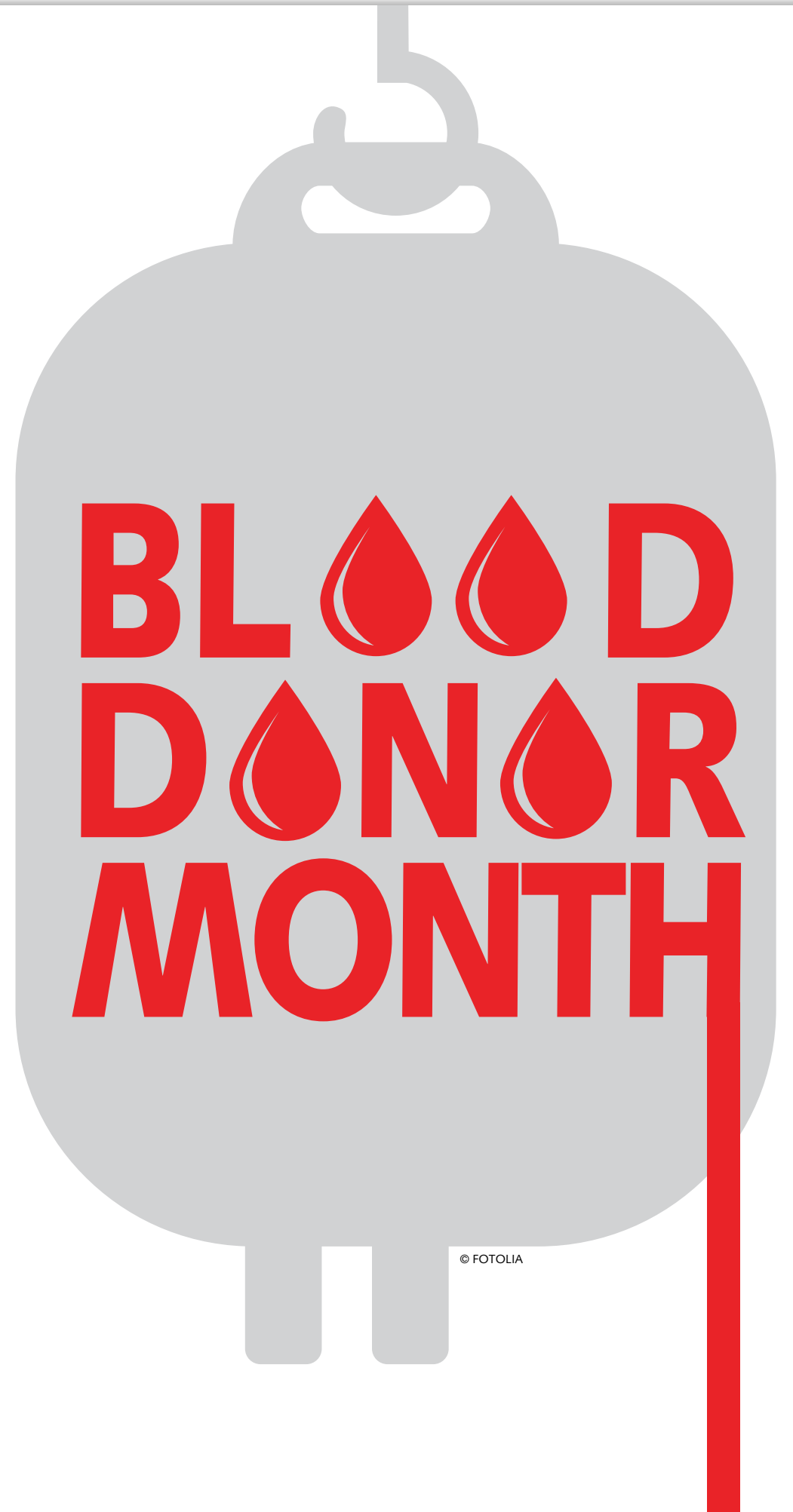
Some people aren't confident that they would be eligible to give blood. You can give if you are at least 17 years of age, weigh at least 110 pounds and meet other donor requirements.

The Red Cross urges everyone to make donating blood a priority this winter, and doing so is easier than ever. To find out where you can give blood and to schedule your appointment, go to [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) or call 800-RED CROSS for additional information.

#### **MOBILE BLOOD DRIVES**

The next time you see a mobile blood drive advertised, hopefully you will feel compelled to offer your donation. Your contribution could make a big difference for someone dealing with a serious disease or suffering after an unfortunate accident.

Eighty percent of the blood donations given to the Red Cross are collected at mobile blood drives set up at community organizations, companies, high schools, colleges, places of worship or military installations.



# Travel and Donation

If you have given blood in the past, have you ever wondered what is behind those odd questions asking if you've traveled to various locations abroad during certain time periods?

The reasoning behind these seemingly random questions is an attempt to verify your eligibility based on your potential exposure to malaria.

The rate of malaria exposure is greater in people who have traveled in certain locations. The American Red Cross likes to review your past travel destinations to rule out any chance of malaria contraction. This is for the safety of those who may come into contact with your blood, as well as to alert you to the potential issue.

## WHAT IS MALARIA?

Malaria is transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes found in certain countries. The danger in terms of blood donations is that it may be transmitted to patients through transfusions. Blood donations are not tested for malaria because there is no sensitive blood test available for malaria, according to the Red Cross.

If you have traveled or lived in a malaria-risk country, the Red Cross may require a waiting period before you can donate blood.

## PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

Here is a Red Cross sample question that you should be



© FOTOLIA

prepared to answer if you plan on giving blood:

If, in the past 3 years, you have been outside the United States or Canada:

- What countries did you visit?
- Where did you travel while

in this country?

- Did you leave the city or resort at any time? If yes, where did you go?
- What mode of transportation did you use?
- How long did you stay?
- What date did you return

to the U.S.?

These are straightforward questions that you should be able to easily answer to prevent the worry about possible malaria exposure. The Red Cross urges you to come prepared to your donation site

with your travel details when you donate. You may download the travel form and bring it with you to help in the assessment of your travel or call 866-236-3276 to speak with an eligibility specialist about your travel.

# Platelet Donation

**W**hen you think of blood donation, you may envision your blood being drawn into a bag and shipped away. One type of blood donation is more involved and can have an even bigger impact.

During a platelet donation, a small portion of your blood is drawn from your arm and passed through a cell-separating machine, which collects the platelets and returns the remaining blood components. After the donation you can resume your normal activities, as long as they include no heavy lifting or strenuous exercise.

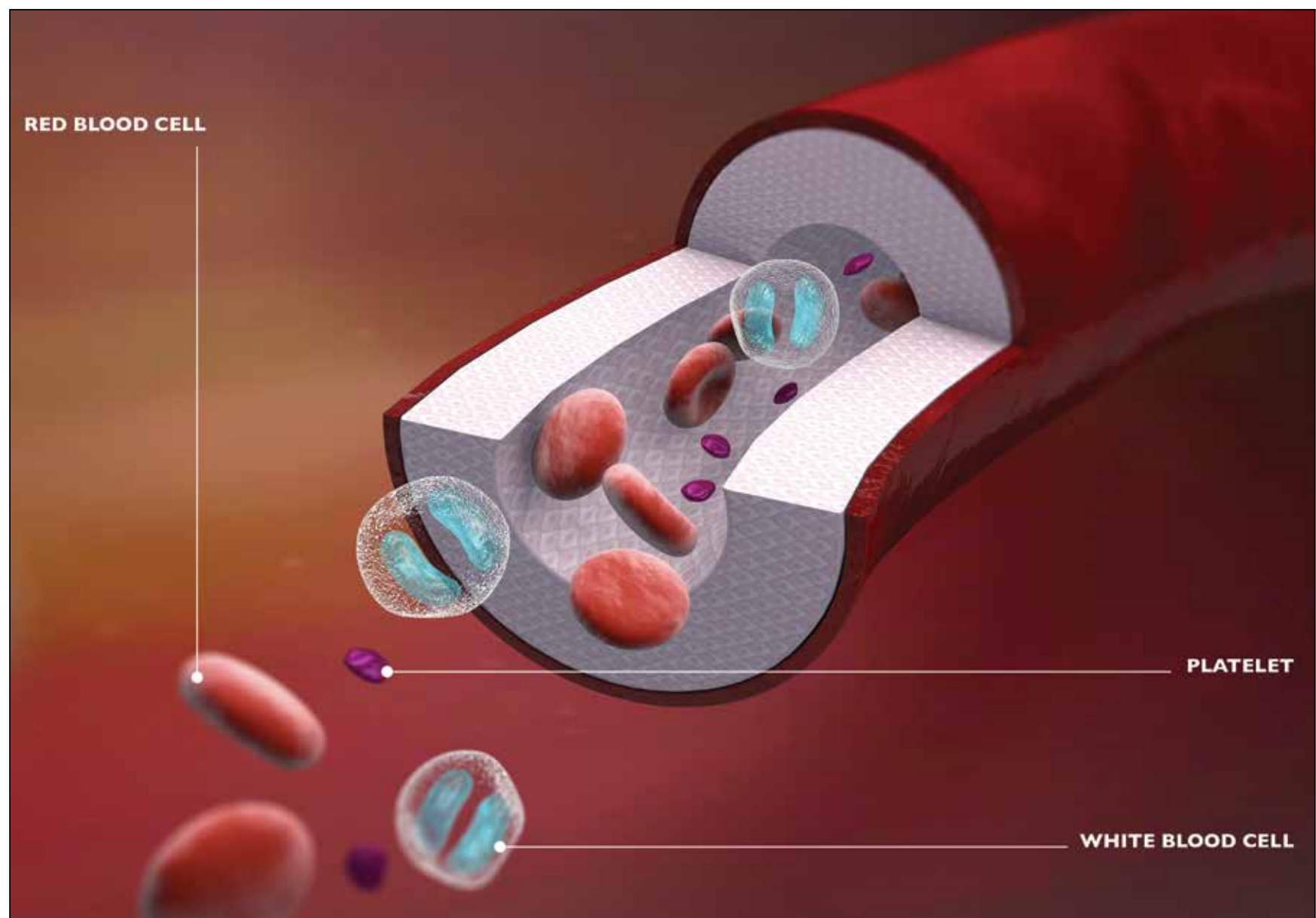
So how can you decide if you should be a platelet donor? Is there really a need for this type of donation?

## BIG IMPACT

According to the America Red Cross, a single platelet donation can provide enough platelets for a full therapeutic dose or more for a patient in need. This is in comparison to regular blood donations, which may need to total four to six to produce a single therapeutic dose.

So who exactly is need of this type of specific, highly concentrated donation? Patients undergoing chemotherapy or organ transplants are a couple of examples, as well as other people with weakened immune systems. Physicians prefer this type of donation in most cases because of the single-donor aspect, which prevents the patient from being exposed to the blood of multiple donors.

The Red Cross urges male platelet donors with A+, B+, and AB blood types to consider a platelet donation. In particular, type AB donors may be ideal for simultaneous platelet and plasma donations. This is because anyone can receive plasma from AB donors, which are represented by only



4 percent of the United States population.

## PLATELET DONATION GUIDELINES

Before donating your platelets, consider these guidelines from the Red Cross:

- Donors cannot take aspirin or medications containing aspirin within two full calendar days prior to a platelet donation.
- You can donate up to 24 times per year.
- The donation takes approximately

1.5 to 2 hours and may be a single or dual arm procedure, depending on the collection device used.

- Call 800-RED-CROSS for platelet donation opportunities at a local American Red Cross Blood Donation Center near you.



# Hosting a Blood Drive

If you're seeking a way to bring community members together for a great cause, look no further than the fun of hosting and coordinating an American Red Cross blood drive.

Your organization will benefit by building morale both within the company and with external stakeholders. And what's better than giving the gift of life?

The Red Cross helps ensure the availability of a safe and reliable blood supply while coordinating the actual execution of the blood drive activities. While your organization will handle the planning and marketing of the event, a Red Cross representative will work with you along every step of the way to create a successful event.

The Red Cross offers these tips for achieving your goals:

- Build buy-in and support from key people. This can include senior management within your company or administration in your school. It's important to engage with these leaders to make sure the funding and assistance is available throughout the process.

- Form and lead a recruitment committee to help sign up potential donors.

- Schedule the event well in advance and clear of potential conflicts.

- Maintain collaborative, positive contact with your Red Cross representative.

- Use your organization's main communication chan-



© FOTOLIA

nels to promote the drive. These can include email, intranets, newsletters, social media and bulletin boards.

- Recruit volunteers to help you with the drive. This can

include asking those not eligible to give blood to help you with the event.

- Be passionate about the cause. This is contagious. If you believe in what you are

doing, you'll pass it on to your volunteers and donors.

- Require scheduled appointments to keep the flow of donors running smoothly.

- Remain committed to the

goal by allocating significant resources to each drive.

Resources can include volunteers, incentives such as gift cards, the facility and staging areas for pre-donation surveys.



# Donors: By the Numbers

**B**y now you have realized that blood donors are a special breed. They are selfless enough to devote their free time to the cause and committed enough to regularly do so.

The American Red Cross has put together an interesting list of statistics related to the average blood donor in the United States.

Some of its key findings:

- The number one reason donors say they give blood is because they “want to help others.”
- Half of Red Cross donors are male and half are female.
- Only 9 percent of people in the U.S. have O-negative blood type. O-negative blood type donors are universal donors as their blood can be given to people of all blood types.
- Only 3 percent of people in the U.S. have AB-positive blood type.

AB-positive type blood donors are universal donors of plasma, which is often used in emergencies, for newborns and for patients requiring massive transfusions.

## ABOUT THE RED CROSS

Here are some fun facts related to the American Red Cross, provided by the organization:

- The American Red Cross blood program started in 1940, under the leadership of Dr. Charles Drew.
- The American Red Cross supplies about 40 percent of the nation’s blood supply.
- The Red Cross provides blood for patients in approximately

2,700 hospitals across the U.S.

- The Red Cross makes blood available to any patient who needs it. Patients are not required to find donors to replace the blood they use (a practice common in Europe and some U.S. blood banks) allowing the patient and their family to focus on recovery.
- About 80 percent of the blood donations given to the Red Cross are collected at mobile blood drives set up at community organizations, companies, high schools, colleges, places of worship or military installations. The remaining 20 percent are collected at fixed Red Cross donor centers.