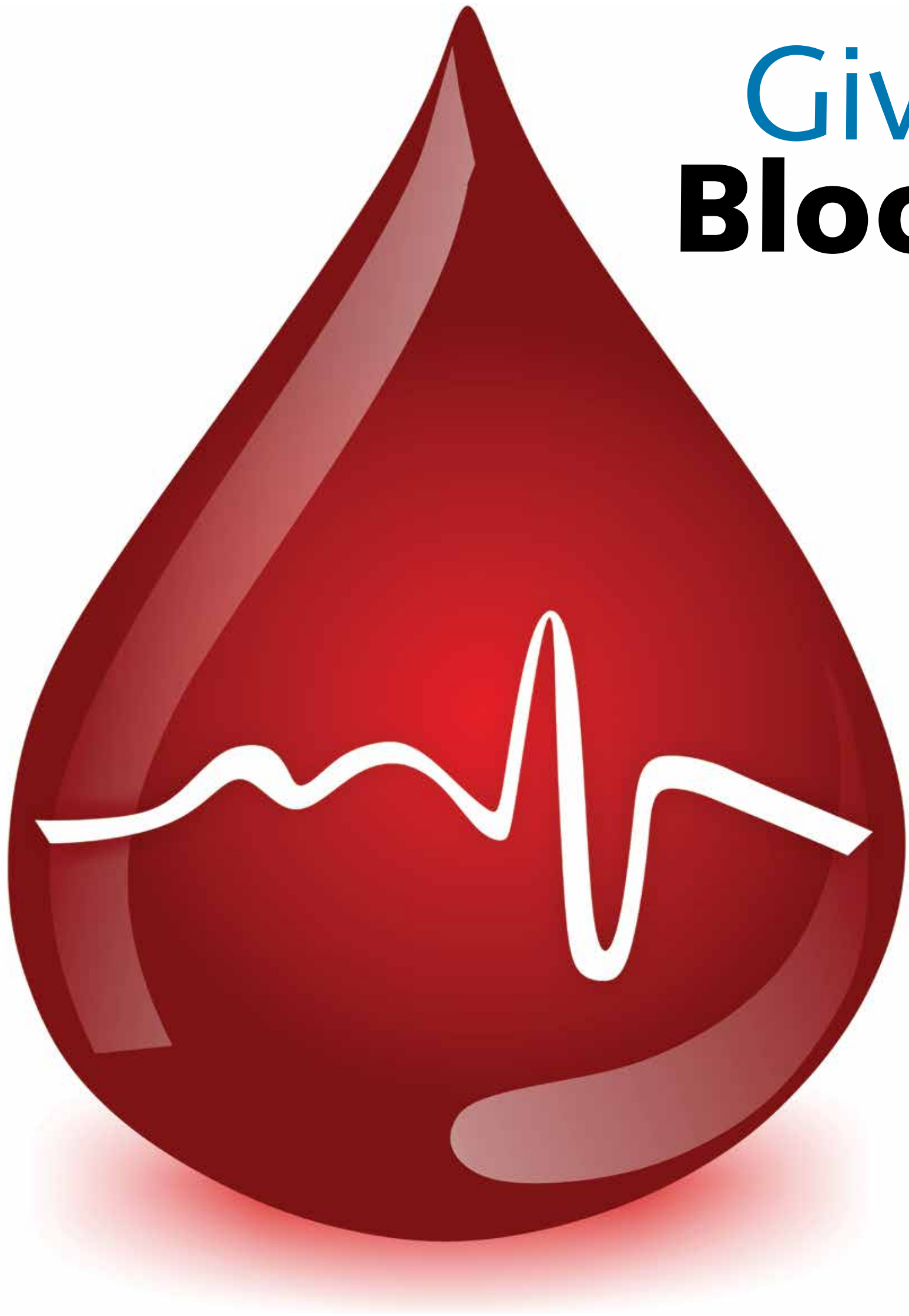


Giving **Blood**



How to Save A Life

A sign for a blood drive is something almost everyone has seen at one point or another. Have you ever stopped at one? Have you ever donated blood? According to statistics, you likely have not. The American Red Cross reports that less than 10 percent of eligible donors give blood every year.

It's time you buck the trend and focus on what your blood can do for others. Keep in mind that in order to donate blood, you must be in general good health and be feeling well. It is not safe to donate blood if you have the flu, for example.

DONATING AND VOLUNTEERING

Donating is absolutely free and helps others, and there are many health benefits to you, as well. If deemed eligible, you can donate blood every 56 days; you can donate platelets every seven days and up to 24 times a year; and you can donate plasma every 28 days and up to 13 times a year.

If you decide to donate more than one type of blood component, be sure to check with the Red Cross, as donating more than one component type can change or limit donation guidelines. To learn about donation opportunities near you, call 800-RED-CROSS.

If you are ineligible to donate, you can give your time in other ways. Becoming a volunteer with the Red Cross allows you to support a respected humanitarian organization. Volunteering also provides great career experience and documented service hours.



You also may be able to make your own schedule and work when and where it is convenient for you. To volunteer, visit <http://www.redcrossblood.org/volunteer>.

HOST A BLOOD DRIVE

The American Red Cross is known for working well with communities. In fact, the orga-

nization works with more than 58,000 blood drive sponsors every year, hosting approximately 150,000 blood drives. A representative will work with you during the entire planning process to help ensure your blood drive is a success.

You and your organization just need to offer the location, publicize the drive and help

schedule donors for appointments. The Red Cross does the rest.

Hosting a blood drive is important because approximately 80 percent of the blood donated to the American Red Cross is collected through drives hosted by communities, high schools, churches and other organizations. Only

about 20 percent is collected at American Red Cross donation centers.

This is in part because blood drives provide people with convenient locations to donate. To host a blood drive, or to receive additional information, visit <http://www.redcrossblood.org/hosting-blood-drive>.

Preparing to Donate



Is this your first time donating blood, or has it been quite some time since your last donation? Here's an outline of the donation process from the American Red Cross to quell your trepidation:

STEP 1: REGISTRATION

When you first arrive, you will be asked to register. This is when staff members will go over basic eligibility with you and get the donation information they need. You will be asked to show some ID and be given material to read about donating blood.

STEP 2: SCREENING

The next step is a quick medical exam. Staff will check your temperature, pulse, blood pressure and your hemoglobin level. You also will be asked to give a

brief medical history and answer questions about recent travel. Don't worry, your answers in this medical interview are private and will remain confidential.

STEP 3: DONATION

A small area of your arm will be prepped and disinfected, and a new, sterilized needle will be inserted. This feels like a quick pinch of the skin. Many donors report feeling very little pain, especially if they look away as the needle is being inserted. It normally takes eight to 10 minutes to

collect a pint of blood, although specific donation types, such as plasma, can take up to two hours.

STEP 4: REFRESHMENTS

After giving your donation, the needle will be removed and a bandage will be placed on your arm. You will then be offered refreshments in the form of a small snack and something to drink. This is to help your body recover. However, you will be able to continue with your normal daily activities after 10-15 minutes.

Helpful Tips

- Wear comfortable clothing, either short sleeves or sleeves that can be rolled up easily.
- Bring a list of any medications you are taking. This includes both prescribed medications and those purchased over the counter.
- Bring your driver's license, your donor card if you have one, or two other forms of identification.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water the day you donate, both before and after.

Benefits of Giving

When you decide to give blood, you are saving a life. That is no small feat. If you need even more motivation, consider all the other benefits you receive as a blood donor.

FREE HEALTH SCREENING

As a part of the donation process, you will receive a brief exam. During the exam, staff will check your vitals, including your temperature, pulse, blood pressure and hemoglobin levels. Keeping yourself informed of these things can help prevent heart disease and can alert you of other potential health risks if there are sudden changes.

HEART HEALTHY

According to the Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide, one of the unifying factors of heart disease is blood viscosity. Defined as the thickness of your blood and how much friction it creates as it travels through your blood vessels, this indicator is related to the amount of stress and damage produced on your arteries. Giving blood on a regular basis reduces your blood viscosity.

REDUCED RISK OF CANCER

Donating blood is a great way to reduce your iron levels, and the preferred treatment for patients with excess iron by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention. Excess iron levels are associated with many types of cancer. According to a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, patients who donate blood regularly have a lower risk of developing cancer than those who do not.

YOU'RE NOT LOSING ANYTHING

Your body replaces the blood you give. Healthy bone marrow constantly makes new red blood cells, plasma and platelets. Platelets are restored in a matter of days, and red blood cells regenerate in about four to six weeks.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

You are saving a life. This is a common slogan associated with donating blood. While many consider it an incentive or reason to donate, what is considered less often is how saving a life makes us feel. The psychological health benefit you receive from knowing you are helping and being a productive, contributing member of society is significant. Roll up your sleeve. It's in everyone's best interest.



How Your Blood Helps

Have you ever wondered what makes your blood donation so special? What happens to your blood after you donate? The Red Cross is in constant need of more blood, and a lot goes into making sure it is on the shelf in case you need it.

UNIVERSAL DONORS

People with Type O negative blood are what the American Red Cross calls “universal donors,” as their blood can be given to people of all blood types. Unfortunately, only 7 percent of people in the United States have Type O negative blood.

This means there is generally always a high demand and a low supply. If you have Type O blood, you are of special interest to the Red Cross. Type AB is a universal plasma donor; these donors can give plasma to any blood type.

ONE DONATION, FOUR COMPONENTS

Your blood actually has four components: red blood cells, plasma, platelets and cryoprecipitate, which is a blood clotting factor. Because of this, a single donation can help more than one patient.

Red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen from the lungs to your body’s tissues and take carbon dioxide back to the lungs. Plasma is a fluid filled with proteins, hormones and vitamins. Its main function is to help maintain blood pressure and regulate body temperature. Platelets and cryoprecipitate are cell fragments and proteins that help with clotting to prevent bleeding.

FROM YOUR ARM TO ANOTHER

A lot has to happen to your blood before it is used. After your donation has been collected, it is taken to a medical lab for processing and testing. Each donation is tested for infectious diseases, and the blood components are separated. If a unit tests positive for a disease, it is discarded and the donor is contacted immediately.

All units that are deemed suitable for transfusion are then labeled and stored. Consider how fast all of this happens, given that the shelf life for donated blood is approximately 42 days from the day it is collected. The American Red Cross makes blood available to be shipped to hospitals 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Got a Question?

We know, giving blood might be an uncomfortable topic for those of us who haven't gone through the process before. Consider the following answers to some of the most common questions first-time donors have.

Is it safe to give blood?

Yes. Each blood donation is collected through a new, sterile needle, which is thrown away after being used one time. Some people do report feeling nauseous or dizzy afterward, but these feelings normally subside within minutes of consuming food and water.

I have such a common blood type. Does the Red Cross really need more of it?

Yes. The Red Cross needs donations of all blood types year round. Your blood could save someone else's life. One car accident victim could require as many as 100 pints of blood.

Why am I asked so many personal questions during registration when I give blood?

The American Red Cross employs the highest safety standards possible for blood donation. This is for the safety of both the donors and the blood they receive. Asking questions is one way American Red Cross personnel can identify individuals who may be at risk for transferring communicable diseases or individuals who may put themselves at risk by donating blood due to their health.

How often can I donate blood?

It takes the body approximately four to six weeks to replace the red blood cells you've given. Therefore, the Red Cross requires you to wait at least eight weeks between blood donations to allow your body to regenerate to full capacity.

What happens to my blood after I donate?

After you donate blood, it is transported to a Red Cross blood component laboratory, where it is first tested for diseases. It is then typed and processed to separate blood components, such as red blood cells, plasma and platelets.

What if I have a disease but don't know it?

If you have a disease that the American Red Cross confirms through testing your blood, you will be notified. The organization also affords you the opportunity to meet with a trained counselor to answer any questions and help you understand the disease.

Are blood types different between ethnic groups?

Certain blood types are more common among certain ethnic groups. For example, Type O (the blood type in highest demand due to its universal application) is most common among the Latino population, at 57 percent, and the African American population, at 51 percent.



Blood 101

Do you know your blood type? Even if you don't, you probably know that every person has a specific type of blood running through their veins. This is important because it means that all blood is not interchangeable; your blood cannot be given to just anybody unless you are Type O.

Here are a few things you should know about blood typing.

ABO BLOOD TYPE SYSTEM

According to the American Red Cross, there are four major blood groups. Each group is distinct due to either the presence or absence of the A antigen or B antigen.

Type A: only has the A antigen on red blood cells, and the B antibody in the plasma.

Type B: only has the B antigen on red blood cells, and the A antibody in the plasma.

Type AB: has both A and B antigens on red blood cells, but neither A nor B antibody in the plasma.

Type O: has neither A nor B antigens on red blood cells, but both A and B antibodies in the plasma.

BLOOD TYPE MATCHING

Blood types must be carefully matched due to the differences in their antigens for a safe transfusion. For example, Type O is considered a "universal donor" because this group can donate red blood cells to anybody since it has neither A nor B antigens.

However, a person with Type O can only receive Type O blood.

Type AB blood can only donate blood to other ABs, but is a "universal receiver," meaning Type AB can receive blood from any other blood type.

Type A can donate red blood cells to As and ABs, and Type B can donate red blood cells to Bs and ABs.

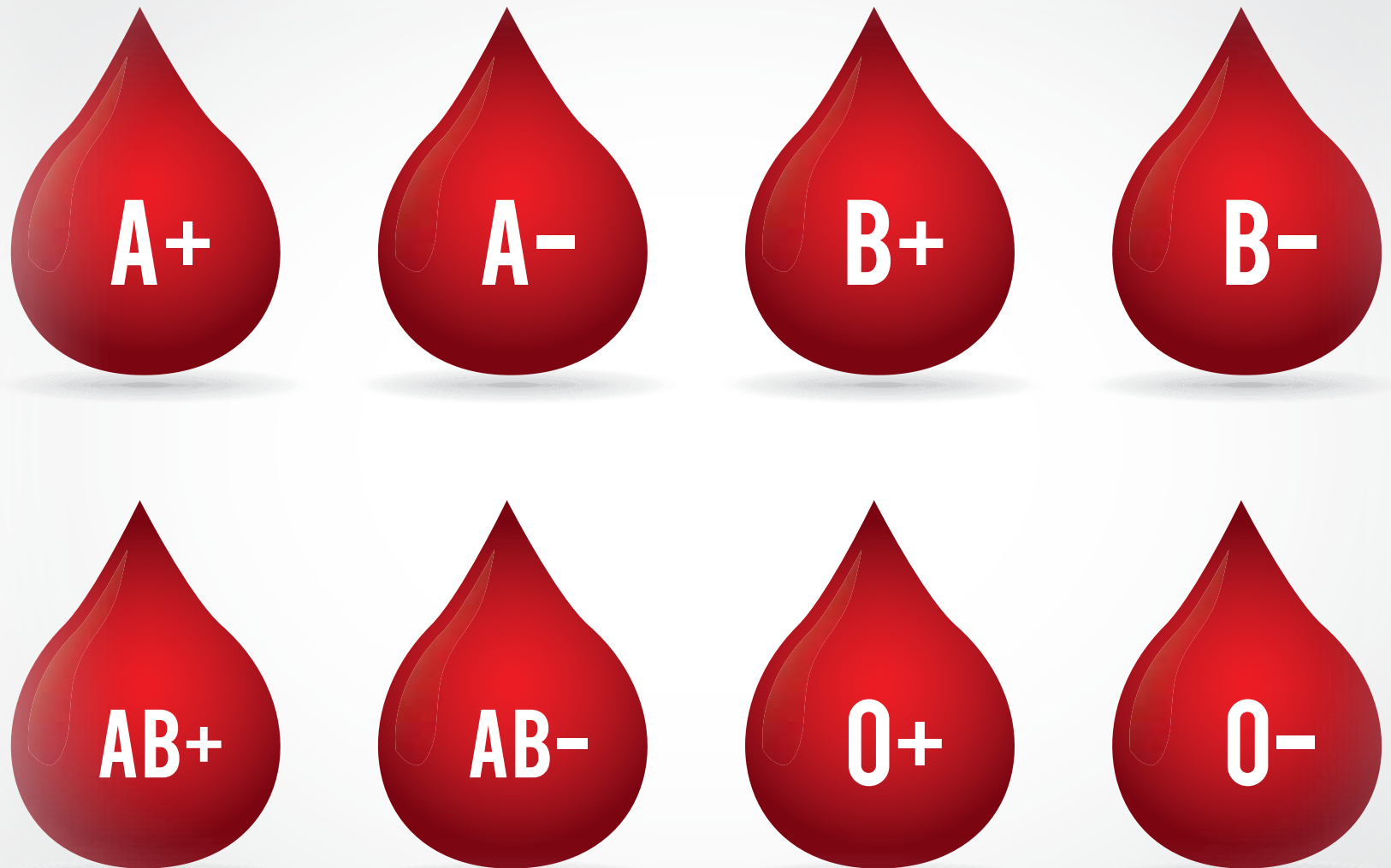
There is one more antigen

that is important when typing blood: the Rh factor. This antigen is distinguished by being either present or absent. This is most commonly referred to

in the positive or negative.

A person with Type B positive blood has only the B antigen on their red blood cells, and the Rh factor is present.

Rh positive blood can only be given to Rh positive patients, while Rh negative blood may be given to either Rh positive or Rh negative patients.



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By the Numbers

Get educated and know how you are helping. The following facts and statistics were uncovered and reported by the American Red Cross.

- Someone in the United States needs blood every two seconds.
- Approximately 36,000 units of red blood cells are needed daily.
- The average blood transfusion requires approximately 3 pints of blood.
- 13.6 million units of blood are collected from approximately 6.8 million people in the United States each year.
- Of this 6.8 million people, 50 percent of them are dedicated, regular donors, with the other half being evenly split between first-time donors and occasional donors.
- The American Red Cross is responsible for approximately 40 percent of the nation's blood supply, serving more than 2,500 hospitals across the country.
- While the Red Cross estimates that 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood each year, less than 10 percent of them do.
- Type O negative blood can be given to people with any blood type. Because of this, it is the type most requested by hospitals and is constantly in short supply.
- The average adult has approximately 10 pints of blood in his or her body. One pint of blood is given during each donation.
- There are four types of transfusable products in your blood, including red blood cells, platelets, plasma and cryoprecipitate (a blood clotting factor). Because of this, a single donation can help more than one patient.

