



BLOOD PROGRAM



THE AMERICAN LEGION

BLOOD AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

The use of the blood of one human being to save the life of another is one of the world's greatest medical achievements. Thousands of people are alive today – happy children, young mothers, accident victims, the elderly – who have survived major operations because blood and blood components were available to combat many types of diseases and other medical problems.

While there will always be risks associated with blood transfusions, blood and blood products from healthy volunteer donors has proven to be much safer than blood from any other source. For this reason, your American Legion post should make every effort to recruit more healthy volunteer blood donors. In addition to making a significant contribution to the health and welfare of your community, donors receive the satisfaction of knowing they have helped someone who needed blood or a blood product.

FACTS ABOUT BLOOD AND BLOOD COMPONENTS*

- ◆ Blood helps keep us alive and healthy. It is pumped by the heart through miles of blood vessels in our bodies, and carries the necessities of life – oxygen, water and food – to all cells of the body. Average-weight adults have 10 to 12 pints of blood.
- ◆ The safety of blood for transfusion is protected by the screening of donors and extensive testing under stringent laboratory conditions.
- ◆ There are four major inherited groups of blood – A, B, AB and O. Blood groups are determined by the presence or absence of an A or B substance on red blood cells. AB blood has both substances, while O blood has neither substance.
- ◆ The Rh factor is another inherited substance on red cells. Those with the Rh factor are considered “Rh-positive (+)” and those without the Rh factor considered “Rh-negative (-).”

- ◆ Over 400 other substances (or factors) may be found on red blood cells. Blood is defined as rare if a factor on the red cell occurs in fewer than one person out of 200. A national donor registry is maintained for the purpose of matching rare blood types.
- ◆ About 10 percent of patients requiring a blood transfusion need whole blood.
- ◆ Most patients are transfused with a component or product extracted from whole blood.
- ◆ Red blood cells, plasma, white blood cells and platelets are four components of whole blood.
- ◆ In 1985 a test to detect the HIV (AIDS) antibody was added to the screening of blood to increase the safety of blood and blood component transfusion.
- ◆ In 1986 testing to combat transfusion associated with non-A, non-B hepatitis was implemented in most blood banks.

HOW IS VOLUNTARILY DONATED BLOOD USED?

TRANSFUSION OF COMPONENTS

A single donation of blood can be separated into a number of components, each of which may be used to treat a distinct illness or injury. In this way, individual patients receive the specific part of blood required and blood supplies are stretched, leading to more efficient management of the overall national inventory.

Some uses of blood and its components are:

Red blood cells

- restore blood volume and oxygen-carrying capacity of blood during surgery
- treatment of anemia

Platelets

- reverse low platelet count sometimes caused by chemotherapy in treatment for leukemia

White blood cells

- used in research, and experimentally to combat severe infection

Plasma and plasma derivatives

- burns
- shock
- treatment of bleeding
- severe liver disease
- preparation of medications, and vaccines for immunization against polio, measles, tetanus, mumps and other conditions

Source: American Blood Commission

WHEN IS BLOOD NEEDED?

Blood donations are needed daily in every community throughout the country. Every minute, more than 25 units of blood or specialized blood components are transfused. That's nearly 37,000 units each and every day.

Over 95 percent of all Americans reaching 72 will need blood, or one of the products that can be derived from blood, in their lifetimes. About 75 percent of all people over 30 know someone who has had a blood transfusion.

A fragile product, blood is a liquid living tissue that must be used within 21-41 days (5 days for blood platelets) of its donation. While people often ‘tune in’ and respond to emergency appeals, daily needs can only be met by volunteer donors on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

FACTS ABOUT THE PATIENTS NEEDING BLOOD*

- ◆ Patients diagnosed with cancer use the highest percentage of blood transfused.
- ◆ About 5 percent of all hospitalized patients receive a transfusion of blood or blood components.
- ◆ More women receive blood than men.
- ◆ Both newborns and children frequently need transfusions of blood and blood components.
- ◆ Most blood is transfused to patients over 65.
- ◆ Patients with the following diseases are the leading users of blood and blood components:
 - Cancer
 - Heart disease
 - Gastrointestinal disease
 - Fractures and trauma
 - Anemia
 - Hemophilia
 - Bone and joint abnormalities requiring surgery
 - Lung, liver and kidney disease

- Bleeding disorders associated with chemotherapy
- ◆ Transplantation of organs frequently requires massive transfusions of blood and blood components.

**Source: American Blood Commission*

WHY DOES A BLOOD TRANSFUSION COST MONEY?

While most blood comes from volunteer donors, a great number of costs are involved before the donor's blood is safe for use by a patient. For example, blood must be carefully tested against disease and to determine an exact match by group (A, B, AB or O) and type (Rh-positive or negative) between donor and recipient.

The costs of operating a nonprofit blood center, and of testing, storing and distributing donated blood, must be added to the costs of administering blood in the hospital.

As with other health-care services, charges for blood and blood services vary among institutions and regions across the country. These charges also vary by product. For example, a unit of platelets may cost more to prepare than a unit of whole blood.

WHO CAN DONATE BLOOD?

Generally, persons in good health between 17 and 65 are eligible to donate blood. Donors older than 65 need special permission from a blood center's medical director.

Temporary deferrals may be made for the donor's safety or to protect the patient who would receive the donated blood. There are several reasons a willing donor may be temporarily turned away. These include being underweight, pregnancy, recent immunization, cold or flu, recent major surgery or recent travel in a tropical country.

Some conditions such as high blood pressure or kidney disease might result in ineligibility to donate blood.

A normal donation of one unit equals about a pint of blood. The donor's blood volume begins to be restored immediately. Complete restoration of body fluid comes within 24 hours. Full replacement of red blood cells takes place in a couple of weeks. That's why current standards set an 8-week interval between donations, or limit them to no more than 5 times a year.

FACTS ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER BLOOD DONOR*

- ◆ Healthy volunteer donors contribute 98 percent of the blood and blood products transfused in the United States.
- ◆ Donors cannot contract AIDS by donating blood.
- ◆ Volunteer blood donors contribute between 11 and 12 donations of blood annually, resulting in the availability of nearly 15 million components for transfusion.
- ◆ Each day, 15,000 donors are needed to meet the ongoing need for blood and components.
- ◆ The number of donors volunteering to commit 2-3 hours to donate platelets by apheresis is increasing steadily.
- ◆ Many lives have been saved by blood voluntarily donated by caring individuals.*
- ◆ Approximately 40 percent of the population are medically eligible to be donors, but fewer than 10 percent are the “quiet heroes and heroines” who provide the blood needed for the entire population.
- ◆ Blood donors are people just like you, coming from all walks of life.
- ◆ Teenage donations have increased rapidly in the past 10 years, due to state legislation lowering the age requirement to 17.
- ◆ Thousands of blood donors discuss with their families their desire to be an organ and tissue donor.

**Source: American Blood Commission*

WHERE CAN BLOOD BE DONATED?

Persons interested in donating blood should contact their community blood center or hospital blood bank, or ask their doctor.

Slightly over 200 community blood centers throughout the U.S. collect 85 percent of all voluntarily donated blood. The widespread use of mobile donor units helps make donating blood simple and convenient. The country's several thousand hospitals are a major factor in the blood service system in terms of transfusions, but their importance in collecting blood has been decreasing over the past several years.

BLOOD DONOR TACKS

Three types of symbols have been approved and are available to qualified Legionnaires or American Legion post, district, county or department officials for presentation to eligible donors.

Blood Donor Tacks may be purchased through **National Emblem Sales** (*see contact information box on following page*).



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All orders must have post certification.

BRONZE

All eligible donors of less than one (1) gallon of blood.

SILVER

With Wreath and Panel: All eligible donors of one (1) or more gallons of blood.

GOLD PLATED

All eligible donors of five (5) or more gallons of blood. An award is now available for eligible donors of ten (10) gallons or more.

NATIONAL COMMANDER AWARDS

Each year the National Commander presents two awards to each of five departments. The first award, given to departments by size category, is awarded for the greatest participation by Legion posts in the Blood Donor Program. The second award, given to departments by size category, is awarded for the greatest percentage of individual participation in the program. The awards consist of certificates signed by the National Commander and the National Adjutant.

DEPARTMENT AND POST AWARDS

This beautiful citation is to be awarded by departments to posts or individuals making an outstanding contribution or having an outstanding record in Blood Donor activities. The certificate is signed by the department commander and department adjutant.

Posts should present this award for exceptional performance in the Blood Donor Program by Legionnaires and non-Legionnaires. The certificate is signed by the post commander and post adjutant when presented by the post.



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NATIONAL EMBLEM SALES

Address: Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206

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Other contacts for blood drive/donor information:

American Association of Blood Banks

8101 Glenbrook Road
Bethesda, MD 20814

American Blood Commission

700 N. Fairfax Street
Suite 505
Alexandria, VA 22314

American Blood Resources Association

P.O. Box 334
Annapolis, MD 21403

American Red Cross

2125 E Street NE
Washington, DC 20006

America's Blood Centers

725 15th Street NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

American Legion departments and posts planning Blood Donor Programs can obtain detailed information by writing.



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