



The need for blood from donors who are Black is urgent.

Blood donors who are Black play a critical role in helping people with sickle cell disease, the most common genetic blood disease in the U.S. Sickle cell disease primarily affects those who are African American or of African descent. Patients with this disease may rely on regular blood transfusions throughout their lives. It is essential that the blood they receive be the most compatible match possible from someone of the same race or similar ethnicity.

Red blood cells carry markers called antigens on their surface that determine one's blood type. The majority fall into one of the following blood types: A, B, AB and O. There are more than 600 known antigens, and some are unique to specific racial and ethnic groups. Patients who have these unique blood types require close blood type matches, especially when receiving frequent blood transfusions, like those with sickle cell disease.

By donating blood, you can make a difference in the life of a patient with sickle cell disease, people with complicated childbirths, individuals fighting cancer, accident or trauma victims being raced to emergency rooms and many more.

Your Blood Can Save Lives! Let us answer some questions you may have.

Is it safe to give blood? Yes, donating blood is safe. You can't get AIDS or any other infectious disease from giving blood. The Red Cross always uses new, sterile needles that are discarded after one use. Prior to donating blood, you will receive a free health screening to check temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate and hemoglobin (iron) levels. All blood donations are tested for over 12 infectious diseases.

Am I eligible to donate if I have a health condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure, sickle cell trait, heart disease, etc.? Approximately 38% of Americans are eligible to donate blood at any given time, so there's a very good chance you meet the criteria! If you have a condition like diabetes or high blood pressure, you're still able to donate as long as your condition is well controlled by medications. Having sickle cell trait does not disqualify you from giving blood.

I am afraid of needles. You're not alone; fear of needles certainly prevents some people from donating blood. But if you're willing to spend a few minutes facing your fears (donating really can be that fast), you may find the satisfaction you feel makes it worth it.

I'm afraid I'll faint. A few steps you can take to ensure you feel your best during and after donating are to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and eat a healthy breakfast or lunch before donating. A regular diet with iron-rich foods like spinach, fish and red meat will also help keep you feeling your best when you donate. Most donors feel fine after donating blood, but if you do feel faint or fatigued, simply lie down until you feel better. It might help you to think about this: You have about 10 pints of blood in your body. Roughly one pint is given during a donation. Your body can replenish that loss in a short time (a matter of hours for some components, a few weeks for others).

Will it hurt to give blood? Only for a moment. Pinch the fleshy, soft underside of your arm. That pinch is like what you will feel when the needle is inserted.

Is blood typed, labeled, and distributed by race? No. Blood is typed, labeled, and distributed to hospitals with no indication of the donor's gender or race.

If there is a blood shortage, will I be able to get blood if I end up in the hospital? Donors like you help the American Red Cross ensure blood is available to be shipped to hospitals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hospitals typically keep some blood products on their shelves, but may call for more at any time, like in the event of large-scale emergencies. We cannot meet the need without your generous gift of blood donation.

Is my privacy protected? Yes, the information you share with us during your donation and the results of tests performed on your donation are confidential. Just like your doctor or other medical professional, your information is confidential and is only shared with you (the donor), except as may be required by law.

What happens to my blood after it is collected? Your donation is processed to establish blood type and tested for infectious diseases. If a test result is positive, your donation will be discarded and you will be notified (our test results are confidential and are only shared with the donor, except as may be required by law). Those units that pass the testing criteria are labeled and stored at a Red Cross facility until we receive an order from the hospital for blood products. We will let you know when your unit has made it to a hospital! You can feel proud knowing you helped save a life.

Call 1-800-RED CROSS if you have any questions about your ability to donate.