

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Giving Blood

**Q: Who is eligible to donate?**

**A:** Donors must be at least 17-years-old and weigh at least 110 pounds. In New York State, 16 year olds are eligible to donate blood provided they have an original signed or faxed copy of the New York State Informed Parental Consent for a 16-Year-Old to Donate Whole Blood. To obtain a copy of this form, [please click here](#).

**Q: What should you do before donating?**

**A:** We want your donation experience to be pleasant, so please remember: Eat a well-balanced meal and drink plenty of fluids before donating. If possible, avoid aspirin for 48 hours prior to donating. Note name and dosage of any medications you are taking.

**Q: How does the blood donation process work?**

**A:** Donating is safe, simple and takes about 45-90 minutes. Supplies are sterile, used only once, and then incinerated. The actual donation process works like this:

- You will complete the donor registration form that includes your name, address, phone number social security number, etc.
- You will be asked a few questions about your health.
- You will receive a mini-physical, including blood pressure, temperature and pulse. In addition, a drop of blood will be obtained from your finger to test for anemia (iron level).
- You will proceed to a donor bed where your arm will be cleaned with an antiseptic.
- During the donation process, you will donate about one pint of blood. This takes about 6-10 minutes.
- Following your donation, you will receive refreshments in the hospitality room or canteen.

Donating blood is simple, and your gift of life may help as many as 3 people.

**Q: What should you do after donating?**

**A:** Please observe the following suggestions:

- Eat well for the next 24 hours.
- Increase your fluid intake for the next 24-48 hours.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco for 30 minutes.
- Avoid strenuous physical exertion, heavy lifting or pulling with the donation arm for about two hours.
- People seldom experience discomfort after donating. However, if you feel light-headed, lie down until the feeling passes. If some bleeding occurs after the removal of the bandage, apply pressure to the site and raise your arm for 3-5 minutes. If bruising or bleeding appears under the skin, apply a cold pack periodically to the area of bruising during the first 24 hours, then warm packs periodically.

If you have any questions concerning your donation, or experience any unexpected problems, please call the American Red Cross at 1-800-364-2707.

**Q: What are the health benefits of donating?**

**A:** You will receive vital health checks at no cost every time you donate blood: pulse rate, blood pressure, body temperature, anemia (iron level) and blood type.

A blood type identification card will also be mailed to first time donors. This card could save precious minutes in the event of an emergency in which you might personally need blood.

**Q: Who does my donation help?**

**A:** Your one blood donation may be used by as many as three different patients because it can be separated into three separate components:

- **Red Blood Cells** - Carry oxygen to all parts of the body and are administered to replenish blood loss. Red blood cells can be kept for 42 days and are usually used by trauma or surgery patients.
- **Plasma** - The liquid part of the blood, is usually kept frozen and can be stored for up to one year. Plasma may be administered to patients with clotting problems.
- **Platelets** - Cause clotting when cuts or other open wounds occur. Donated platelets expire after five days. Leukemia and transplant patients often need platelet transfusions.

**Q: Will it hurt when the needle is inserted?**

**A:** Only for a moment. Pinch the fleshy, soft underside of your arm. That pinch is similar to what you will feel when we put the needle in your arm.

**Q: Is it safe to give blood?**

**A:** Yes. Sterile procedures and disposable equipment are used. Each donor's blood is collected through a new, sterile needle which is then discarded.

**Q: What does the Red Cross do with my blood?**

**A:** The blood will be delivered to a blood component laboratory at the Red Cross, where it is processed into several components (e.g., red blood cells, platelets, plasma, etc.). A single blood donation can help as many as three different patients.

**Q: Does the Red Cross pay blood donors?**

**A:** No. All Red Cross blood donors are volunteers who generously give blood out of a spirit of altruism.