

Blood Donation

Blood is a living tissue made up of blood cells, platelets, and a fluid called **plasma** that contains protein and a number of other components. A **blood transfusion** is the administration of blood or blood components directly into the bloodstream. Every year, approximately 23 million units of blood components are transfused into patients in the United States. On any given day, an average of 63,000 components are needed.

The April 17, 2002, issue of *JAMA* contains an article about an uncommon complication of blood transfusion.

WHO NEEDS BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS?

- Persons who have lost blood due to burns and other injuries
- Persons who lose blood during surgical procedures
- Certain individuals with cancer, sickle cell disease, and other disorders

WHO CAN DONATE BLOOD?

There are a few requirements for blood donors; however, most individuals are eligible to donate as often as every 8 weeks. To donate, you must

- Be at least 17 years of age
- Weigh at least 110 pounds
- Be in good health

If you are taking medication, you can usually donate blood; inform the blood donation staff before you donate.

WHO CANNOT DONATE BLOOD

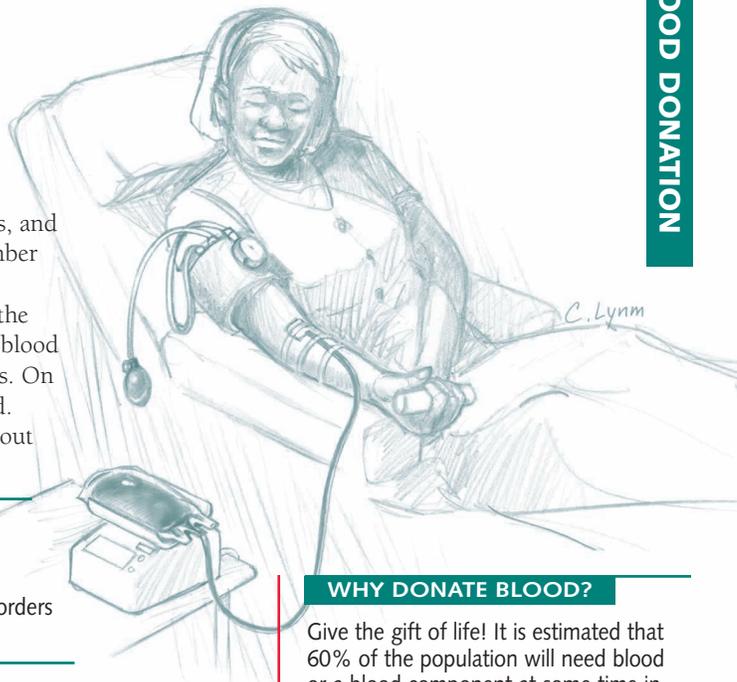
Individuals may be temporarily or permanently deferred from donating blood. Individuals who are **temporarily deferred** are those who have a short-term condition or circumstance under which donation is not recommended, including

- Heart attack or cardiac surgery in the last 6 to 12 months
- Malaria in the past 3 years, or travel in the past year to an area where malaria is present
- Transfusion with blood or blood products in the past year
- Having received a tattoo or any body piercing within the past year
- Household contact within the past year with a person who has hepatitis
- Not feeling well on the day he or she wishes to donate
- Taking antibiotics within 72 hours before donation
- Low blood cell count

If you are temporarily deferred, you can check with your local blood bank to find out when you can donate.

Individuals who are **permanently deferred** should never donate blood. Permanent deferrals include

- Chemotherapy or radiation to treat some types of cancer
- Hepatitis at age 11 years or older
- High risk of having HIV due to injection drug use or sexual contacts



WHY DONATE BLOOD?

Give the gift of life! It is estimated that 60% of the population will need blood or a blood component at some time in their lives. Only about 5% of eligible individuals actually donate. As a result, the blood supply nationwide often runs short, especially around holidays and during summer months.

Donating blood is safe and relatively painless. You cannot get HIV (the virus that causes AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome]), hepatitis, or other diseases from donating blood. It only takes 35 to 40 minutes to donate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Association of Blood Banks
301/907-6977
www.aabb.org
- America's Blood Centers
888/256-6388
www.americasblood.org

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous *JAMA* Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page Index on *JAMA*'s Web site at www.jama.com.

Sources: American Association of Blood Banks, America's Blood Centers, American Red Cross, National Blood Data Resource Center, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, Stanford Medical School Blood Center, United Blood Services.

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