

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **HOW MUCH BLOOD DO I HAVE IN MY BODY?**

Women have about 8-10 pints, and men about 10-12 pints of blood in their bodies.

## **ARE THERE AGE LIMITS FOR BLOOD DONORS?**

You must be at least 17 years old (16 years old with written parental consent) to donate blood. There is not upper age limit when donating blood as long as your health history permits.

## **IS IT SAFE TO GIVE BLOOD?**

Yes. Donating blood is safe. The supplies used to collect your blood are sterile and only used once. You cannot get HIV or any other infectious disease from donating blood.

## **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GIVE JUST A UNIT OF WHOLE BLOOD?**

The process for whole blood donation usually takes about one hour with the collection itself usually lasting only about 5-15 minutes. The donation process includes registration, a brief medical screening, blood collection, and refreshments. Expect the donation process to take longer for any type of apheresis donation.

## **HOW MUCH BLOOD IS TAKEN?**

Whole blood and apheresis (platelet) donations are about 1 pint. One pint is roughly equal to 1 pound.

## **HOW OFTEN CAN I GIVE?**

You can donate whole blood every 56 days. Red blood cells are the oxygen carrying cells. They can take two weeks or longer to fully return to normal. You can donate platelets (apheresis donation) as much as twice in a 7 day period - or up to 24 times in a rolling 12 months. Platelet and plasma components are replaced in the body more quickly than red cells. Platelets will return to normal levels within a few hours of donating. Plasma, the watery substance of your blood, takes a couple of days.

## **I'M TAKING MEDICATIONS. CAN I STILL DONATE BLOOD?**

Many medications are acceptable. Consult your physician to be sure you're well enough to donate and give us a call at 806-358-4563 if you have questions about your eligibility. Please do not assume you're not eligible without inquiring.

## **WILL TRAVEL ABROAD MAKE ME INELIGIBLE TO DONATE?**

Travel to certain countries may prevent you from donating blood. When you present to donate blood, our staff will discuss all potential travel-related deferrals.

## **WILL RECENT VACCINATIONS MAKE ME INELIGIBLE TO DONATE BLOOD?**

Recent vaccinations may prevent you from donating blood. For example, you may be temporarily deferred if you have recently received a vaccine made from live viruses or if you have received vaccines to prevent infection after exposure to an infection. Flu vaccines are NOT cause for deferral. If you are unsure, contact us to ask.

## **I AM A DIABETIC. CAN I STILL DONATE BLOOD?**

Yes, insulin-dependent and non-insulin-dependent diabetics can donate blood as long as their sugar levels are stable.

## **I AM PREGNANT. CAN I DONATE BLOOD?**

No, pregnant women cannot donate blood until six-weeks postpartum and must have been released from their physician. We are also frequently asked about breast-feeding mothers. If it has been six-weeks and you have been released from your physician, nursing mothers can donate blood.

## **HOW LONG UNTIL MY BLOOD IS USED?**

All blood donations are processed, tested and then available for use between 24 and 48 hours after collection. This is why we always have to be prepared BEFORE an emergency occurs.

- Whole blood is processed into components (red cells, platelets, plasma). After processing, the red cells can be stored for up to 42 days.
- Plasma can be frozen and stored for up to 12 months.
- Platelets (from whole blood or by apheresis) must be used within five days.

## **WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL BLOOD TYPE?**

- Type O negative is the universal donor and can give blood to any other blood type. However, type O-negative patients can only receive type O negative blood (except in very rare cases). Eight percent of the U.S. population has O negative blood.
- Some people confuse type O negative with type O positive blood. Type O positive is the most common blood type.
- AB positive is the universal recipient and can receive blood from any other blood type. Two and a half percent of the U.S. population has AB positive blood.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **IS IT SAFE TO RECEIVE BLOOD?**

The blood supply is safe. Thirteen tests (10 for infectious diseases) are performed on each unit of donated blood. Blood donor eligibility standards, individual donor screening, laboratory testing, confidential exclusion of donations, and donor record checks are in place at donor centers to help ensure the safety of blood transfusions.

## **ARE THE HEALTH HISTORY QUESTIONS NECESSARY EVERY TIME?**

Yes. Screening questions must be asked of all donors at each donation. This is an FDA requirement.

## **DOES COFFEE MEMORIAL PAY DONORS?**

We do not pay for any type of donations. Our blood center draws only volunteer, altruistic donors, who are historically the least likely to have infections that can be transmitted by blood. The FDA has guidelines against paying for donations that will be used for human transfusion.

## **WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DONATIONS AND WHICH ONE SHOULD I DO?**

Thank you for being a new or regular blood donor! As you may or may not know, there are a few different types of blood donation.

### **Whole Blood Donation**

This is what most individuals think of when they hear "blood donation." A pint of whole blood is drawn into a plastic bag, and is processed in the blood center laboratory and separated into components (red blood cells, plasma and sometimes into platelets and cryoprecipitate). After processing, the red blood cells can be stored for up to 42 days.

\*\*If you do not know your blood type, a whole blood donation is recommended\*\*

### **Apheresis Donation**

An apheresis blood donation is one where the blood goes through a special machine to separate it during the donation, so that only certain parts of blood are collected. This allows more of a single component, such as red blood cells, plasma or platelets, to be collected in one sitting. Ask our staff which products are most needed from your blood type at your time of donation.

For females: Females who have ever been pregnant (including miscarriages and terminated pregnancies), can no longer be considered for platelet and/or plasma donation. When a woman is pregnant, antibodies develop between the mother and the fetus. Recent studies have shown that these antibodies can result in a Transfusion Related Acute Lung Injury (TRALI) that can be life-threatening in the receiving patient.

### **Automated Red Cell Donation**

An automated red cell donation is performed using an apheresis machine, where the actual donation takes about 30-35 minutes, and allows you to donate two pints of red cells. This is especially helpful when we have a critical need for your blood type or if you are type O- (the universal donor) or type O+ (the most common blood type). There are additional qualifications for automated red cell donations. If you do an automated red cell donation, you can only donate every 112 days.

### **OTHER Blood Donation Types:**

#### ***Volunteer Donation***

A volunteer blood donation is the standard, or most common, type of blood donation in which an individual donates one pint, which goes to any patient in need.

#### ***Directed Donation***

A directed donation is blood that is donated for you by family members or friends who have the same blood type as you. This requires an order from the patient's physician as well as an approved list of acceptable donors from the patient.

#### ***Autologous Donation***

Blood drawn from an individual prior to elective, non-urgent surgery during which loss of a lot of blood is expected. The donated units are stored for up to 42 days and given back to the same individual when and if a need for transfusion arises. This is very useful for patients with rare blood types who can be very hard to support from the regular blood supply. Autologous donors must be healthy enough to donate safely, so this is rarely an option for seriously ill patients.

**If you have a question that was not covered in these Frequently Asked Questions, please call us at Coffee Memorial Blood Center, 806-358-4563. Thank you for your interest in helping to save lives!**