



RICHARD T. MOORE

STATE SENATOR • WORCESTER & NORFOLK



BLOOD DONATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the minimum requirements to become a blood donor?

Check with your local blood bank to determine the exact requirements, but generally, you must be at least 16 years of age, a minimum of 110 pounds, and in basic good health.

Will donating blood hurt?

You may feel a slight sting in the beginning lasting only a couple of seconds, but there should be no discomfort during the donation.

Are blood donors paid?

No. Blood collected for transfusion in the United States is given by volunteer blood donors.

How badly is blood needed?

Blood supplies can vary depending on the region and time of year. As donor qualifications continue to become stricter and as the donor population ages, our nation is at risk of a low blood supply. If you are eligible, your blood donations are needed.

Why are there often blood shortages?

Most blood centers strive to maintain an optimum inventory level of a three-day supply. Due to unpredictable demands from trauma incidents the inventory fluctuates hourly. When the blood supply drops below a three-day level, blood centers begin alerting local donors to increase the inventory to a safe operating level.

Can I get AIDS from donating blood?

No. There is no risk of contracting AIDS or any other disease through the donation process. Each collection kit is sterile, pre-packaged and used only once.

Do I have enough blood in my body to donate?

Yes. The body contains 10 to 12 pints of blood. Your whole blood donation is approximately one pint.

How much blood is taken?

For a whole blood donation, approximately one pint (which weighs about one pound) is collected. For a platelet donation, the amount collected depends on your height, weight and platelet count.

How often may I donate?

You may donate whole blood once every 56 days, which allows plenty of time for your red cells to be replenished. Platelet (apheresis) donors may donate more frequently – as often as once every seven days and up to 24 times per year. This is because the body replenishes platelets and plasma more quickly than red cells. Platelets will return to normal levels within about 72 hours of donating. Plasma (the liquid portion of your blood) will return to normal levels within a couple of days. Red blood cells (the oxygen-carrying cells) will take approximately two weeks to reach their normal levels.

How long until my blood is used?

Most blood donations are processed and available for use within 48 hours.

Does donated blood stay on the shelf indefinitely until it is used?

No. Each unit of whole blood normally is separated into several components. Red blood cells may be stored under refrigeration for a maximum of 42 days, or they may be frozen for up to 10 years. Red cells carry oxygen and are used to treat anemia. Platelets are important in the control of bleeding and are generally used in patients with leukemia and other forms of cancer. Platelets are stored at room temperature and may be kept for a maximum of seven days. Fresh frozen plasma, used to control bleeding due to low levels of some clotting factors, is kept in a frozen state for usually up to one year. Cryoprecipitated AHF, which contains only a few specific clotting factors, is made from fresh frozen plasma and may be stored frozen for up to one year. Granulocytes are sometimes used to fight infections, although their efficacy is not well established. They must be transfused within 24 hours of donation.

Other products manufactured from blood include albumin, immune globulin, specific immune globulins, and clotting factor concentrates. Commercial manufacturers commonly produce these blood products.

Are the health history questions necessary every time I donate?

To ensure the safest possible blood supply, all donors must be asked all the screening questions at each donation. The FDA requires that all blood centers conform for this practice.

What fees are associated with blood?

While donated blood is free, there are significant costs associated with collecting, testing, preparing components, labeling, storing and shipping blood; recruiting and educating donors; and quality assurance. As a result, processing fees are charged to recover costs. Processing fees for individual blood components vary considerably. Processing fees for one specific component also may vary in different geographic regions. Hospitals charge for additional testing that may be required, such as the crossmatch, as well as for the administration of the blood.

Is there anything I should do before I donate?

Be sure to eat well at your regular mealtimes and drink plenty of fluids.

How long will the actual donation process take?

The actual donation takes about 5-10 minutes. The entire donation process, from registration to post-donation refreshments, takes about one hour.

How will I feel after I donate?

Most people feel great after giving blood. If you feel abnormal symptoms, let a staff member at the blood donation center or blood drive know. You should avoid lifting heavy objects or strenuous exercise for the next 24 hours; otherwise you can resume full activity as long as you feel well.

This FAQ was prepared with information obtained from the AABB (formerly American Association of Blood Banks) web site, www.aabb.org.