



America's Blood Centers®
It's About Life.

The Timeline of Blood Donation

Understanding the blood donation process is crucial for supporting policies that ensure a safe and available blood supply. Here's a step-by-step breakdown of the journey from donor to patient.

THE DECISION TO DONATE

1

- Only 3% of Americans donate blood, despite 65% being eligible
- Fewer workplace and school blood drives require donors to seek out donation opportunities
- Regular donations are needed to ensure blood is available for patients in need

DONOR PREPARATION

2

- Donors register and receive information about eligibility and donation
- Complete a confidential health questionnaire
- A brief physical exam (blood pressure, pulse, temperature, hemoglobin levels) ensures they are healthy enough to donate
- Donor may be asked to donate at another time based on the result of the screening process

THE DONATION PROCESS

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- Whole blood donation only takes 10-15 minutes
- Apheresis donation of specific blood components returning others back to donor can take 60-90 minutes



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TESTING AND PROCESSING

- Blood samples sent to laboratories for testing
- Tests include blood typing and screening for diseases (HIV, Hepatitis B/C, Syphilis)
- Whole blood separated into components (Red Blood Cells, Plasma, Platelets) and is bagged for transfusion
- Testing time: 12–24 hours

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STORAGE AND SHELF LIFE

- Red Blood Cells: 42 days
- Plasma: 1 year (frozen)
- Platelets: 5–7 days
- Cryoprecipitated Antihemophilic Factor: 1 year (frozen)

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DISTRIBUTION AND USE

- Blood used every 2 seconds in the U.S.
- Primary uses: cancer treatments, trauma care, chronic conditions (e.g., sickle cell disease)
- Some patients require blood that is more specifically matched, more likely to come from a donor of a similar racial and ethnic background



IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY BLOOD CENTERS

- Over a million people come to a community blood center each month to provide blood to patients across more than 3,500 hospitals
- Community blood centers operate in more than 1,100 communities nationwide



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Encourage regular donations to meet patient needs
- Support community, workplace, and school blood drives
- Promote donor diversity to ensure matched units are available for all patients
- Recognize the critical importance of having blood on the shelf before an emergency strikes

