



Questions and Answers: The Impact of Coronavirus on the U.S. Blood Supply *(March 23, 2020)*

Is it safe to donate blood during the coronavirus pandemic?

Individuals should not donate blood if they are feeling ill or if they have been exposed to coronavirus or to individuals that have been exposed to coronavirus. Blood centers are taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of donors and their staff by implementing social distancing measures and increased infection control protocols. In addition, all donors are screened to ensure they are feeling well. Each donor goes through a mini-physical that includes a temperature check as well as a visual check on the donor's well-being (coughing, nose draining, hard time breathing, etc.).

Is there a risk that COVID-19 can be transmitted by blood?

There is no known risk of individuals transmitting coronavirus through blood transfusion, even if they are asymptomatic. COVID-19, like other respiratory viruses, is not known to be transmitted by transfusion of blood and blood components. To date, there are no known cases of COVID-19 or previous coronaviruses (SARS and MERS) being transfusion transmitted.

Will COVID-19 impact the availability of blood for patients in need?

Blood centers are working with hospitals to ensure they are considering the blood supply as part of their preparedness planning. While the utilization of blood components is expected to decrease during the pandemic as elective surgeries and procedures are delayed or cancelled, the need for blood remains. Blood centers' efforts are targeted to ensure blood is available for patients that continue to require transfusions during this pandemic, such as cancer patients, individuals with blood disorders such as sickle cell disease, trauma victims, and others.

What is the impact of COVID-19 on blood collections?

There is significant prolonged risk to the availability of blood for patients in need due to cancelled donation appointments and blood drives. This risk is expected to last for the duration of the pandemic as thousands of blood drives across the country have been cancelled for the coming months, resulting in hundreds of thousands of potential lost blood donations. The COVID-19 pandemic could also decrease the number of healthy donors able to sustain the blood supply needed by patients for an extended period of time.

Can I leave my house to donate blood?

Yes! Blood donation is not considered a mass gathering or a social event, but donors are asked to make appointments in advance to donate blood to assist with social distancing efforts at blood centers. Blood donation occurs in a controlled event with trained staff, and is a recognized essential activity that must continue, even in the face of "shelter in place" measures. Blood centers prioritize the safety of donors and their staff and have put additional safety procedures in place, including social distancing measures and increased

infection control. Blood centers are highly regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and held to far higher standards than general public spaces. As the U.S. Surgeon General has said, “social distancing doesn’t mean social disengagement”.

Who should donate?

All healthy and eligible individuals that are feeling well should consider donating. Individuals should not donate blood if they are feeling ill, have coronavirus, or have been exposed to individuals with, or with the potential to have, coronavirus. Individuals can donate whole blood every eight weeks (56 days) and apheresis platelets every 7 days up to 24 times per year. If you have questions about whether you are eligible to donate, the best thing to do is contact your local blood center.

How do blood centers ensure individuals are healthy to donate?

Each donor goes through a mini-physical that includes a temperature check as well as a visual check on the donor's well-being (coughing, nose draining, hard time breathing, etc.). Donors are also asked a series of additional questions to assure the safety of the blood component.

What extra precautions are blood centers taking during the coronavirus pandemic?

The safety of blood donors, recipients, and blood center staff is our top priority. Blood centers are heavily regulated by the FDA and follow appropriate infection control standards of donor rooms and mobile buses, which include sanitation of donor waiting rooms and donation chairs. Blood centers are taking additional steps to implement social distancing protocols and increase infection control measures throughout the donation process to protect against COVID-19.

How can I donate?

Individuals can find their local blood center at: <https://americasblood.org/for-donors/find-a-blood-center/>. We strongly encourage individuals to make appointments to help blood centers with social distancing efforts.

What have federal agency officials said about COVID-19 in relation to the blood supply?

Senior federal officials throughout the federal government have reiterated that blood donation is safe and must continue:

“We know many of you are at home practicing the President’s guidelines for social distancing, but one thing we should all consider, especially our millennials and Gen Z, is donating blood,” VADM Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H., Surgeon General

“It is safe to donate blood...Part of preparedness includes a robust blood supply. Healthy individuals should schedule an appointment to donate today to ensure that blood is available for those patients who need it,” ADM Brett P. Giroir, M.D. Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“We need people to start turning out in force to give blood...We need people to prevent the blood supply from getting depleted”, Dr. Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D, Director, Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) at the Food and Drug Administration.

Has the blood supply experienced anything like this before?

The U.S. blood supply is facing an unprecedented situation as our nation coordinates response efforts to COVID-19. Past disaster situations have had a more local or regional impact, allowing other parts of the country to supplement any shortages. Coronavirus is impacting communities across the country simultaneously and donors in all areas are needed.

Can I get tested for coronavirus at a blood center?

Blood centers are not healthcare providers and thus do not provide coronavirus tests. Individuals that are ill or think they have been exposed to coronavirus should not visit a blood center. Blood centers do however screen all donors to make sure they are healthy and eligible to donate.

Where can I find additional resources about COVID-19 and the blood supply?**Additional Resources**

- [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\).](#)
- [FDA](#)
- [ABC – COVID-19 Page](#)
- [AABB](#)
- [OSHA](#)
- [WHO](#)

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