



# TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

## Blood Donation

### THE POWER OF SAVING LIVES

In the United States, someone needs blood every 2 seconds. They may be battling cancer or have sickle cell disease; they may have been involved in a car accident or be a burn victim; they may have just received a heart transplant or maybe it's a premature baby whose life hangs in the balance. Your blood donation can save their life.

#### BLOOD TYPES AND WHY THEY MATTER

We all must receive a blood type that is compatible with our own, so that our immune system doesn't fight back or reject the transfusion. There are 8 common blood types, which depend on the presence or absence of antigens A or B and an Rh factor. The Rh factor is a protein on the red blood cells which is either present (+) or absent (-), usually referred to as positive (+) or negative (-).

The 8 common blood types are: A+, A-, B+, B-, O+, O-, AB+, AB-. The 'O' type means that neither the A or B antigen is present on the red blood cells.

Let's leave it to the experts to know which blood types are compatible and which transfusion can be given. But it is important for you to know that those with the blood type O- are considered Universal Donors, which means their blood type can be transfused to anyone. Because of this, O- blood is transfused in all emergency scenarios when the recipient's blood type is unknown and is thus in highest demand and shortest supply.



Also important to know is that O+ blood type is the most common (37% of the population), which means this type is also in high demand.

That being said, it doesn't matter which blood type you are, it can help someone! There are a variety of ways you can donate.

- » Whole blood donation. This is the most common and simplest way we can donate. The entire (or whole) amount is donated and any blood type can donate. Whole blood is usually given to trauma patients or those having surgery.
- » Power Red donation. You donate a concentrated amount of red cells. This is a process that separates the red blood cells from the other blood components, returning the plasma and platelets back to you. Ideal donors are O+, O-, A-, B-. Red cells are given to trauma patients, newborns, emergencies while giving birth, those with sickle cell anemia, or those experiencing blood loss.

- » Platelet donation. Platelets are cells in your blood that form clots and stop bleeding. Ideal donors are A+, A-, B+, O+, AB+, AB-. Platelets are often used for cancer patients or organ transplants, as well as other surgical procedures.
- » Plasma donation. An automated process that separates plasma from the other blood components. Donors must be AB+ and AB-. Plasma is used to stop bleeding in emergency or trauma situations.

## WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR DONATION?

We want everyone to donate! But we also want to keep everyone safe. Therefore, there are some requirements that must be met, depending on which type of donation you'd like to give.

- » Whole blood donation
  - Must be at least 16 years old
  - Must weigh at least 110 pounds
  - Can donate every 56 days
  - Must be in good health and feeling well
- » Power Red donation
  - Females must be 19 years old, 5'5", and 150 pounds
  - Males must be 17 years old, 5'1", and 130 pounds
  - Can donate up to 3 times a year; up to 2 times a year for males under 18 years
  - Must be in good health and feeling well
- » Platelet donation
  - Must be at least 17 years old
  - Must weigh at least 110 pounds
  - Can donate every 7 days or up to 24 times per year
  - Must be in good health and feeling well

- » Plasma donation
  - Must be at least 17 years old
  - Must weigh at least 110 pounds
  - Can donate every 28 days or up to 13 times per year
  - Must have type AB blood
  - Must be in good health and feeling well

Each blood donation can save up to three lives. Each year, 6.8 million people donate—which sounds great but that's actually only 3% of eligible donors! January is National Blood Donor month—let's all vow to make a difference. Let's all give the greatest gift of all—*life*.

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### TIPS FOR DONATION:

- » Eat a healthy meal, focusing on iron-rich foods before and after, such as fish, red meat, beans, and spinach
- » Drink extra (nonalcoholic) fluids the day before and for 24 hours after you donate
- » Don't take aspirin 2 days before your donation, especially if you're donating platelets
- » No heavy lifting or vigorous exercise for 24 hours after you donate
- » Take multivitamins with iron if you donate frequently