

## Giving Blood

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Donating blood is a safe, easy process that can save someone's life. You can be the source of blood needed to treat people with injuries and illnesses such as cancer, anemia, and **hemophilia**.<sup>1</sup> Blood is needed constantly, year-round.

Your single donation may help three or more patients, because your whole blood is broken down into its parts. Each part can then be used to treat a different person for a different disease. For example, red blood cells are used to treat anemia and make routine blood transfusions. **Platelets**<sup>2</sup> are used mainly for cancer patients. Fresh frozen plasma (the liquid part of the blood) is used to treat shock and clotting problems.

To give blood, you must be at least 17, weigh at least 110 pounds, and be in good health. It is safe to donate as often as every two months. That's more than enough time for your body to rebuild its supply. Everyone is a potential blood recipient (one who receives blood). But only about half of us meet the age and medical requirements to be donors (who give blood). That's why it's so important for everyone who can give blood to do so.

It is impossible for a donor to get AIDS—or any other illness—from donating blood if correct procedures are used. The blood technician uses a new, sterile needle for each person who gives blood. The needle is used only once and then destroyed. So it can't carry an infection to the next donor.

You can give blood for a specific friend or family member who is going to have surgery. If you're scheduled for an operation, you can also give blood for yourself ahead of time. That way you can entirely eliminate the small chance of being infected by receiving someone else's blood. All blood is screened for signs of infection before it's used. These tests are nearly 100 percent accurate. The risk of refusing a needed transfusion is far greater than the risk of infection.

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<sup>1</sup>**hemophilia:** an inherited blood defect found in males, marked by delayed clotting of blood

<sup>2</sup>**platelets:** small disks in the blood of vertebrate animals that assist in blood clotting