



**American
Red Cross**

Blood Services
Great Lakes Region



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FAQs About Whole Blood Donation

Donating Whole Blood through the American Red Cross

Why donate blood?

Blood is needed for emergencies and for people who have cancer, blood disorders, sickle cell, anemia and other illnesses. Some people need regular blood transfusions to live. Imagine if giving blood was part of everyone's life. Something you did on a regular basis, like eating at your favorite restaurant. What kind of difference would that make? For nearly 5 million people who receive blood transfusions every year, your donation can make the difference between life and death.

What can you expect when you donate?

1. Registration: You will be asked to show an ID. You will read information about donating blood.
2. Health History and Physical: You will take a health history questionnaire to a private area to fill out. A trained staff person will then process your questionnaire and take your temperature, blood pressure and check your iron levels. If everything checks out, you will then proceed to donate.
3. Donation: Staff will cleanse an area on your arm and insert a needle for the blood drawing procedure. You will have 7 to 10 minutes to relax while the bag is filling. When approximately a pint of blood has been collected, the staff person will remove the needle and place a bandage on your arm.
4. Refreshments: You will now spend a few minutes enjoying cookies and juice or other refreshments in an area typically called "canteen." This gives your body a little time to recover after the loss of fluids. There are trained staff and volunteers on duty if you have any concerns.

During the process, you will be given a sheet of post donation instructions along with a telephone number for concerns to take home with you. The whole process takes approximately an hour.

About an hour can save several lives when you donate blood!

Tips Before Donating

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Have a good breakfast or lunch.
- Drink extra water and fluids to replace the volume you will donate (avoid tea, coffee, or other beverages with caffeine).
- Eat iron-rich foods — red meat, fish, poultry or liver, beans, iron-fortified cereals, raisins and prunes.
- Avoid fatty foods, such as hamburgers, fries, or ice cream before donating. Tests for infections done on all donated blood can be affected by fatty materials — lipids — that

appear in your blood for several hours after eating fatty foods. When this occurs and required testing cannot be performed, the blood may need to be discarded.

During the Donation

- Wear clothing with sleeves that can be raised above the elbow.
- Show the staff any "good veins" that have been used successfully in the past to draw blood.

Relax

- Take the time to enjoy a snack and a drink in the refreshments area immediately after donating.
- Rehydrate by drinking plenty of fluids over the next 24 to 48 hours.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity or heavy lifting for about five hours after donation.
- If you feel light headed, lie down, preferably with feet elevated, until the feeling passes.
- In rare cases when bleeding occurs after removing the bandage, apply pressure to the site and raise your arm for 3 to 5 minutes; if bleeding or bruising occurs under the skin, apply a cold pack to the area periodically during the first 24 hours.
- If for any reason, something doesn't feel right, call the American Red Cross toll free number provided to you after your donation.
- Enjoy the good feeling that comes with knowing that you may have saved as many as three lives.