

## **National Blood Donor Month.**

Nothing can replace blood. And unless you are a vampire, chances are you can spare some blood and help save a life or more! This is why National Blood Donor Month is so important for raising awareness to how helpful donating blood can be.

### **About Blood**

Blood is such a complex part of our system. But how much do you really know about blood besides what you learned in ninth grade biology? Did you know that everyone's blood is made up of four components? These include, red blood cells, platelets, plasma, and white blood cells. Even though we all have the same components, there are eight different blood types. Some are rarer than others, which is why the more people who donate, the better. Variety matters with donation. Blood is important because it delivers oxygen and nutrients to cells and transports metabolic waste away from cells.

### **Why Donating Blood is so Important**

Every two seconds of everyday, someone needs a blood transfusion. Each whole donation has the potential to save up to three lives. Nothing can replace blood and it doesn't have a very long shelf life. A common misbelief is that the most people who need blood are accident victims. This is not true. The people who need blood transfusions the most are cancer treatment patients, those undergoing orthopedic surgeries, cardiovascular surgeries, and people with inherited blood disorders. There is more to blood transfusion than blood type. Ethnicity and Heritage can help or hinder transfusions.

### **What to Know Before Donating**

Those eligible for donating may do so as early as 16 years old. However, those under 18 must have parental permission. There are four different types of blood donation: whole blood donation, double red cell donation, platelet donation, and plasma donation. All have specific requirements, so it's best to check to make sure which type of donation is suitable for you. Not everyone is able to donate. Speak to your doctor about whether donating is possible for you. Some reasons for being unable to donate are: the cold, flu, or other types of illnesses, taking specific medications, low iron, and traveling outside of the United States. If you were previously unable to donate, you might be able to donate now!

### **How to Prepare**

*Before your appointment*, check in with your doctor. American Red Cross suggests preparing by eating an iron-rich diet leading up to your appointment. This includes red meat, fish, poultry, beans, spinach, iron-fortified cereals, and raisins. It is also important to prepare by staying well rested and hydrated. *On the day of your appointment*, make sure to bring your photo ID for proof of age, a medication list including all prescription and over-the-counter medicine you are taking, and a good book to keep yourself occupied while the donation takes place. It is also recommended to drink an extra 16 oz. of water before your appointment. The American Red Cross suggests wearing a long-sleeved shirt that you can roll up above your elbows. A mini-physical and survey of your health history will be taken at your appointment. *After your appointment*, you will be given a few minutes to recovery with some cookies or other snacks. It is recommended to drink extra liquids and avoid alcohol over the next 24 hours. Keep the bandage on for a few hours to avoid skin rash and wash around the bandage with soap and water.

For the rest of the day, avoid vigorous exercising. Keep eating iron-rich foods and if you feel any lightheadedness or dizziness, stop what you are doing and sit or lie down until you feel better.

### **Community Care Physicians**

Community Care strongly encourages consulting your provider if you are considering donating blood. If you are need of a provider, our Concierge Care Coordinator would be more than happy to connect you with one. Call (518) 782-3800.

### **Sources:**

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