

RedCrossBlood.org

Blood emergency: Red Cross issues urgent call for blood and platelet donors

*Less than three-day supply of most blood types;
new and existing donors called to help save lives*

(July 29, 2019) — The American Red Cross now faces a blood shortage and has issued an emergency call for eligible individuals of all blood types to give and prevent delays in medical care. “Medical emergencies and critical treatments don’t stop for holiday celebrations. Patients depend on lifesaving blood transfusions every day,” said Cliff Numark, senior vice president, Red Cross Blood Services

- Right now, the Red Cross has less than a three-day supply of most blood types available – and less than a two-day supply of type O blood. Blood donations are currently being distributed to hospitals faster than donations are coming in. More donations are needed now to replenish the blood supply.
- The Red Cross strives to keep a five-day supply on hand at all times to meet the needs of patients every day and be prepared for emergencies that would require significant volumes of donated blood products.
- Blood transfusion is the fourth most common inpatient hospital procedure in the U.S., and these blood products can only come from volunteer donors. Yet, only 3 out of 100 people in the U.S. give blood. Unlike many other lifesaving medical treatments, blood donations cannot be stockpiled. Red blood cells have a shelf-life of only 42 days and platelets just five days.
- Type O negative is the universal blood type and what emergency room personnel reach for when there is no time to determine the blood type of patients in the most serious situations.
- Type O positive is the most common blood type and can be transfused to Rh-positive patients of any blood type.

Missing Types sees encouraging response, but *all* donors needed now

In June, the Red Cross launched the [Missing Types campaign](#) to encourage donors – especially new donors and those who have not donated in the past years – to give blood or platelets during the challenging summer months. Through the campaign, the letters A, B and O – letters that make up the main blood groups – disappeared from popular brands to symbolize what happens when blood goes missing from hospital shelves during blood shortages.

Despite an encouraging response to the campaign, blood donations still fell short of expectations in June, resulting in more than 24,000 fewer donations than needed and more than 300 fewer here in the Pacific Northwest Blood Services Region, causing a significant draw down of the Red Cross blood supply.

“Blood is only available when generous blood and platelet donors roll up a sleeve to give, and right now, all donors – especially those who have never given or haven’t given in a while – are urged to make an appointment to give today,” Numark added.

How to help

Donors of all blood types, especially type O, are urged to make an appointment to donate using the [Blood Donor App](#), at [RedCrossBlood.org](#) or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). Donation appointments and completion of a [RapidPass](#) online health history questionnaire are encouraged to help reduce the time it takes to donate.

About the American Red Cross The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation’s blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](#) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](#), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](#).