

Blood Donor Awareness

Did you know that January is Blood Donor Awareness month? Since 1970, fifty-six years and counting, every January celebrates the heroes who donate blood and blood-related products to help those with critical needs. January was selected to call attention to the year-round need for blood donations, especially during the winter months when weather, holiday travel, and seasonal illnesses can increase the risk of blood shortages. Blood cannot be manufactured. The only source is generous people willing to donate, and the need for this life-saving gift never slows.

According to the American Red Cross, on average, someone in the United States needs blood every 2 seconds. The Association for Blood Donor Professionals January 2024 report shows that approximately 62% of the population is eligible to donate; however, only around 3% donate, equating to approximately 7 million donors annually. Of these, the average number of donations is 1.8 times per year. Currently, statistics show that more women than men are donating. The largest age group of donors is 25-64 years old.

There are four known blood types: O, A, B, AB. Additionally, there is the Rh (Rhesus) factor in blood typing. The Rh refers to a specific protein (antigen) found on the surface of your blood cells. If you are Rh-positive (+), it means you have the Rh protein. Most people are Rh-positive. If you are Rh-negative (-), you don't have the Rh protein. If your blood is Rh-, your donation can be accepted by either Rh+ or Rh- recipients; however, if your blood is Rh+, your donation can only be accepted by Rh+ recipients.

There are many ways to donate blood:

- Whole blood – the most flexible donation. Blood can be transfused or separated into its components. This is frequently given to trauma patients and those undergoing surgery.
- Power Red – harvests a concentrated dose of red cells. This donation is very helpful to newborns, people with sickle cell anemia, and those suffering from blood loss.
- Platelets – harvest the platelets, which are the cells that form clots and stop bleeding. Platelet donations are a vital part of cancer treatments and organ transplant procedures.
- Plasma – the plasma is separated from the other components of your blood and harvested. It is primarily used in emergencies and trauma situations to help stop bleeding.

Donating blood can be part of your healthcare routine and being a wise consumer for your health, as it can help with prevention, early action, and smarter use of your health benefits. When you donate:

- **You get a mini-physical.** This confirms you're healthy enough to donate. The exam can expose high blood pressure or heart arrhythmia. You'll also be screened for several infectious diseases you may be unaware of. Your blood type will also be determined. This information can be useful if you ever require blood from someone else. Did you know your medical insurance plan also provides a no-cost annual wellness exam? Your wellness exam and these mini-physicals help keep you "in-the-know" about your health status year-round.
- **It may lead to a healthier cardiovascular system.** Regular blood donations are linked to lower blood pressure and a lower risk for heart attacks. According to Dr. Robert A. DeSimone, "If your hemoglobin is too high, blood donation helps to lower the viscosity of the blood, which has been associated with the formation of blood clots, heart attacks, and stroke." Your medical insurance plan also has excellent resources and programs that promote heart-health and healthy lifestyles.
- **It can lead to a happier, longer life.** It feels good to help others. Donating life-saving blood is a selfless act. You're providing for people in need. Altruism and volunteering are linked to positive health outcomes, including less risk of depression and possibly greater longevity.
- **Free snacks.** When you donate blood, on average, your body burns about 500 calories to replace the blood you donate.

Although most insurance carriers don't directly host blood drives, many will partner with national organizations such as the American Red Cross, local blood banks, and regional healthcare provider groups. These partnerships focus greater attention on the constant need for blood donations and promote wellbeing, often tying into each carrier's unique wellness programs and promoting better health to the people they serve.

Nearly two-thirds of people in the United States can safely donate life-saving blood to those in need, from newborns to emergency and trauma and cancer patients. There are many benefits to the donor as well, from a mini-physical that can early detect health issues, to the good feeling you get by helping people which can translate into a happier, longer life. The world needs more heroes, and this is a simple way for you to be counted among them.

For additional lifestyle and well-being guidance, please reach out to Jennifer Green at Venbrook, our preferred benefits partners, at jgreen@venbrook.com

Thank you,

Jennifer

Jennifer Green

Vice President of Wellbeing & Engagement

jgreen@venbrook.com | [LinkedIn](#)

Office: (949) 652-6327



Venbrook Group, LLC

6320 Canoga Avenue, 12th Floor

Woodland Hills, CA 91367

www.venbrook.com

For more information:

Related articles:

American Red Cross: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/donate-blood/how-to-donate/types-of-blood-donations.html>

Association for the Advancement of Blood & Biotherapies: <https://www.aabb.org/for-donors-patients/national-blood-donor-month>

Columbia University Irving Medical Center: <https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/surprising-benefits-donating-blood>

National Blood Donor Month website: <https://www.blooddonormonth.org/donorimpact>

Carrier Links:

Aetna: <https://www.aetna.com/about-us/login.html>

Anthem: <https://www.anthem.com/account-login/>

Blue Shield of CA: https://ping-ext.blueshieldca.com/as/authorization.oauth2?response_type=code&client_id=member-experience-prod&redirect_uri=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.blueshieldca.com%2Fpa%2Foidc%2Fcb&state=eyJ6aXAiOiJERUYiLCJhbGciOiJkaXliLCJlbmMiOiJBMTI4Q0JDLUhTMjU2Iiwia2lkjoiSC1hR1NRazNmb0RfTGMO0WDIQM09lMVZrXy1zliwic3VmZml4IjojNUNFanVyLjE2NjEwOTgxNjYifQ..zVSd8osAQe6x8O44_4LaDA.HNQbmekhutY1MGh712zQT8g8iL64pH846PrBfW7p-7nLLlvELLzpEeCzEMW9l22FyVXQLLHVUKC_LNoT_xxS0N58dSOoVa_q8rFLlzoXTHVsDbzMvyj8s52RHVsl4F.dyBNSMutm1k7o6dypoQsSw&nonce=Sn3Z4lxCODR4gtwfgqK_4R7h-

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Kaiser:

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