

## Start the New Year by helping to save someone's life - Give blood

It's estimated that every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood<sup>1</sup> - and that's just under normal circumstances. Just think: In the time it's taking you to read this, three people need a blood donation.

Unfortunately, there are more people in need of blood than there are people who donate it. Blood supplies across the country constantly are at staggeringly low levels - leaving premature babies, cancer patients, accident victims and others at great risk. In fact, only about 5 percent of eligible donors in the U.S. donate blood in any given year.<sup>2</sup>

With the start of a new year, January is as good a time as any to give someone a new start in life by becoming a blood donor as part of National Blood Donor Month.

### Here are some general guidelines for donating blood:

- You must be healthy - you feel well and can perform normal activities. According to the American Red Cross, if you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, healthy also means that you are being treated and the condition is under control.
- You must be at least 17 years old. Some states allow blood donations if you are at least 16 years old.
- You must weigh at least 110 pounds.
- You must not have donated blood in the past 56 days.

The entire process - from the time you arrive to the time you leave - takes about one hour. Before any blood is collected, potential donors are asked to complete a health history. During that time, the potential donor's temperature, pulse, blood pressure and blood count will also be measured.

After that, if you're approved to be a blood donor, all that's needed from you for the actual donation part of your visit is approximately 10 minutes of your time - and about a pint of your blood. Your body will replace the plasma (fluid part) within 24 hours and the cells within a few weeks. At most donation sites, you'll even get a cookie and juice after to help you adjust to the slight decrease in plasma.

Think of it this way: You could be helping to save someone's life - and you'll have a perfectly reasonable excuse to have a cookie!

For more information on how to become a blood donor, contact the American Red Cross at 800-GIVELIFE (448-3543) or go to [www.redcross.org/donate/give/](http://www.redcross.org/donate/give/).

<sup>1</sup> Blood Services. American Red Cross. Accessed on December 3, 2007. [www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0\\_320\\_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0_320_00.html).

<sup>2</sup> Why Give? American Red Cross. Accessed on December 3, 2007. [www.givelife2.org/donor](http://www.givelife2.org/donor).

