



American Red Cross Faces Severe Blood Shortage as Coronavirus Outbreak Threatens Availability of Nation's Supply

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ST LOUIS - The American Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Healthy individuals are needed now to donate to help patients counting on lifesaving blood.

Individuals can schedule an appointment to give blood with the Red Cross by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org), using the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#), calling 1-800-RED-CROSS or enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

As the coronavirus pandemic has grown here in the U.S., blood drive cancellations have grown at an alarming rate. To date, nearly 2,700 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country due to concerns about congregating at workplaces, college campuses and schools amidst the coronavirus outbreak. These cancellations have resulted in some 86,000 fewer blood donations. More than 80% of the blood the Red Cross collects comes from drives held at locations of this type.

Here in the Missouri-Arkansas Region, 56 blood drives have been canceled, resulting in 1,883 fewer blood donations. The Red Cross is adding appointment slots at donation centers and expanding capacity at many community [blood drives](#) across the country over the next few weeks to ensure ample opportunities for donors to give.

Volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need

The Red Cross expects the number of cancellations to continue to increase, which is causing heightened concern for blood collection organizations and hospitals across the country. This blood shortage could impact patients who need surgery, victims of car accidents and other emergencies, or patients suffering from cancer.

“I am looking at the refrigerator that contains only one day’s supply of blood for the hospital,” said Dr. Robertson Davenport, director of transfusion medicine at Michigan Medicine in Ann Arbor. “The hospital is full. There are patients who need blood and cannot wait.”

“In our experience, the American public comes together to support those in need during times of shortage and that support is needed now more than ever during this unprecedented public health crisis,” said Chris Hrouda, president, Red Cross Biomedical Services. “Unfortunately, when people stop donating blood, it forces doctors to make hard choices about patient care, which is why we need those who are healthy and well to roll up a sleeve and give the gift of life.”

The Red Cross is committed to blood drive safety

“We know that people want to help, but they may be hesitant to visit a blood drive during this time. We want to assure the public that blood donation is a safe process, and we have put additional precautions in place at our blood drives and donation centers to protect all who come out,” said Hrouda.

The Red Cross has implemented new measures to ensure blood drives and donation centers are even safer for our donors and staff, including:

- Checking the temperature of staff and donors *before* entering a drive to make sure they are healthy.
- Providing hand sanitizer for use before the drive, as well as throughout the donation process.
- Spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors.
- Increasing enhanced disinfecting of surfaces and equipment.

At each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees already follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection, including:

- Wearing gloves and changing gloves with each donor.
- Routinely wiping down donor-touched areas.
- Using sterile collection sets for every donation.
- Preparing the arm for donation with an aseptic scrub.

There is no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusion, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

“Volunteer donors are the unsung heroes for patients in need of lifesaving blood transfusions. If you are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give, please schedule an appointment to give now,” added Hrouda.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities:

Due to cancellations in the region please direct donors to redcrossblood.org where they can search by zip code for blood drives that are still scheduled in their area, and, where applicable donor centers with expanded hours.

Blood donation process

To donate blood, individuals need to bring a blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification that are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also must meet certain height and weight requirements.

Donors can also save up to 15 minutes at the blood drive by completing a RapidPass®. With RapidPass®, donors complete the pre-donation reading and health history questionnaire online, on the day of donation, from a mobile device or computer. To complete a RapidPass®, follow the instructions at RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass or use the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#).