

# **Blood Supply At Critical Levels For American Red Cross, Residents Are Asked To Take Time To Donate**

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January 11 2022 1:20 PM



ALTON/EDWARDSVILLE - This region has always been generous with its blood donations. Joe Zydlo, regional communications manager, has issued an urgent plea for help with the national blood crisis.

“The American Red Cross is facing its worst shortage in more than a decade,” Zydlo said. “Blood donors needed now!”

“Blood and platelet donations are critically needed to replenish the dangerously low blood supply that is threatening patient care. Donors of all blood types – especially type O – are urged to make an appointment now.”

Zydlo said COVID-19 is starting to impact the American Red Cross’ blood drives once again with the surge involved with Omicron.

“The positive rates are getting higher and higher and what happens is locations that do drives cancel,” he said. “That is why we are not sending all of our blood drive listings right now to people, but having them check [redcrossblood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org). This happened when the Pandemic started in March 2020. If blood isn’t available in trauma situations, they will have to pause the procedure and that could have a fatal outcome. If people are healthy and eligible to give blood, please make appointments or participate in some of our upcoming events.”

Dangerously low blood supply levels are posing a concerning risk to patient care and forcing doctors to make difficult decisions about who receives blood transfusions and who will need to wait until more products become available.

Blood and platelet donations are critically needed to help prevent further delays in vital medical treatments, and donors of all blood types - especially type O - are urged to make an appointment now to give.

In recent weeks, the Red Cross had less than a one-day supply of critical blood types and has had to limit blood product distributions to hospitals. At times, as much as one-quarter of hospital blood needs are not being met.

## **Pandemic challenges**

The Red Cross continues to confront relentless challenges due to COVID-19, including about a 10 percent overall decline in the number of people donating blood as well as ongoing blood drive cancellations and staffing limitations. Additionally, the pandemic has contributed to a 62 percent drop in blood drives at schools and colleges.

“Winter weather across the country and the recent surge of COVID-19 cases are compounding the already-dire situation facing the blood supply,” said Dr. Baia Lasky, medical director for the Red Cross. “Please, if you are eligible, make an appointment to give blood or platelets in the days and weeks ahead to ensure no patient is forced to wait for critical care.”

The Red Cross and the NFL are partnering this January, during National Blood Donor Month, to urge individuals to give blood or platelets and help tackle the national blood

shortage. Those who come to give blood, platelets or plasma in January will automatically be entered for a chance to win a getaway to Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles. As an extra thank-you from the Red Cross, those who come to donate will also be automatically entered to win a home theater package and a \$500 e-gift card. Terms apply; visit [RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl](https://www.redcrossblood.org/SuperBowl) for more information.

## **How You Can Help Locally**

For those healthy and eligible donors in the Greater St. Louis and Metro East area who are St. Louis Blues fans, you can join the Red Cross, the St. Louis Blues, Bally Sports Midwest and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield by rolling up a sleeve this winter and helping patients in need by donating blood at the 15th annual St. Louis Blues Blood Drive, Thursday, Jan. 20.

Blues fans will have the opportunity to donate blood at one of nine convenient locations in Missouri and Illinois from noon to 7 p.m. Everyone who presents to donate will receive a specially designed, yellow Blues T-shirt, while supplies last.

For more information or to make an appointment, simply download the Red Cross Blood Donor App or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org), and enter sponsor code: **BLUES**, or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

## **Volunteers Needed**

In addition to blood donors, the Red Cross also needs the help of volunteers to support critical blood collections across the country. Blood drive volunteers play an important role by greeting, registering, answering questions and providing information to blood donors throughout the donation process. Blood transportation specialists – another volunteer opportunity – provide a critical link between blood donors and blood recipients by delivering blood to hospitals in communities across the country. To volunteer to support Red Cross blood collections, visit [redcross.org/volunteertoday](https://www.redcross.org/volunteertoday).

## **Blood Drive Safety**

Each Red Cross blood drive and donation center follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and [additional precautions](#) – including face masks for donors and staff, regardless of vaccination status – have been implemented to help protect the health of all those in attendance. Donors are asked to schedule an appointment prior to arriving at the drive.

## **Save Time During Donation**

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](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass) or use the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#).

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.

**Over the next month, about 74% of donation appointments remain unfilled in the region. Make an appointment to give blood or platelets as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).**