

## Baystate Health Blood Donor Center Commonly Asked Questions

Persons who are considering blood donation often have questions. Here are a few of the most common:

**1. How long does the donation take?**

A whole blood donation for an individual, including registration, rest period, and refreshments usually takes 30 - 45 minutes.

**2. Should I eat before donating blood?**

Yes, we recommend a meal or a snack within four hours before donating.

**3. Can I get AIDS by donating blood?**

You can't get AIDS or other communicable disease by donating blood. Sterile, disposable supplies are used for every donation.

**4. How is blood used?**

A gift of whole blood is usually divided into red cells and plasma, so that one gift can help more than one individual. Premature infants, surgical patients, accident victims, and persons with leukemia and other diseases often require blood transfusions.

**5. How often can I donate blood?**

You can donate whole blood every 56 days and up to five times each year.

**7. Is there an age or weight requirement?**

Blood donors must be at least 17 years of age and weigh at least 110 pounds. There is no maximum age limit.

**8. What about medical conditions and medications?**

- ✓ Colds and allergies: Someone with a cold, active allergies, or symptoms such as congestion or sore throat, should wait until he or she feels better to donate.
- ✓ Blood pressure: Most blood pressure medications are O.K. if taken on a regular basis for at least one month. Anyone with blood pressure under 90/50 mmHg or above 180/100 mmHg cannot donate.
- ✓ Antibiotics: Someone taking most oral antibiotics should finish the prescription, wait at least 72 hours, and be free from symptoms.
- ✓ Cancer: With the exception of certain types of hematologic/immunologic cancers, anyone that has a cancer that has been in remission for 5 years is eligible.
- ✓ Surgery: For most types of surgery, healing must be complete and normal activity resumed.

- ✓ Pregnancy: Anyone who is pregnant or who has been pregnant within the past six weeks is not eligible to donate. Healing must be complete and regular activity resumed following Cesarean delivery.
- ✓ Diabetes: Blood donation is possible if the condition is controlled by diet and/or medication.
- ✓ Tattoos: Accept if done at a state-regulated facility, otherwise there is a 3 month deferral.
- ✓ Ear or Skin Piercing: Accept if done with sterile, single-use equipment was used, otherwise there is a 3-month deferral
- ✓ Other medical conditions and medications: You are welcome to call us in advance with any questions. All discussions are confidential.

These are only a few of the commonly asked questions about donating blood. For more information, you are welcome to contact the Blood Donor Center at Baystate Medical Center at (413) 794-4600.