

Overcoming Your Fear About Donating Blood

Blood donation saves lives, but only about four to five percent of eligible blood donors in North America give blood.

This is a low response to an immense need. A car crash, surgery, or serious illness can cause any one of us to need a life-saving blood transfusion. A single pint of donated blood can help save as many as three lives. But for some potential donors, fear stops them from donating. If you are afraid of giving blood, you are not alone. Many first-time donors report a fear of needles or anxiety about the process of giving blood.

Here is some information to help you take the important next step in deciding to donate:

A fear of needles doesn't need to stop you

Most donors experience some anxiety about the actual donation process, but nervousness does not need to become an excuse. Although a fear of needle sticks or the sight of blood can leave some potential donors feeling reluctant, balanced, positive thinking can counter anxiety-provoking thoughts. One donor who has given many pints of blood over the years shared that he starts each donation process by envisioning a child in a hospital who is injured or ill. He thinks that this child is likely to be just as afraid of needles as he is, but the child needs to find a way to work through her fear. If a child can do it, this donor reminds himself,



then certainly he can do it, too. This thinking allows him to donate blood time and time again. Another donor recently shared that she donates blood frequently because, “ten minutes of a little discomfort for me can give someone years and years of additional life.” Find a phrase or thought that will work for you, and repeat it as the process begins. Take some deep, calming breaths along the way.

The blood donation process is quick and easy

Make yourself familiar with the blood donation process. This will help you feel prepared for each step along the way. Remember that you can tell the person who greets you that this is your first time donating; staff will assist you and ease your fears.

During most community blood drives, donors first register. Staff and volunteers go over basic eligibility and donation information, and donors will be asked to show a donor card, driver's license, or other forms of ID. The next step involves a mini-physical. Donors answer some questions during a private and confidential interview about health history and places where they have traveled. A donor's temperature, pulse, blood pressure and hemoglobin levels are checked in a small sample of blood. The next step involves actual donation, which usually takes about eight to ten minutes. The process usually ends with refreshments, such as juice, cookies and pretzels, to help prevent donors from feeling lightheaded.

Distract Yourself

During the donation process, close your eyes and listen to some favorite tunes. Or you may decide to look away. As you scan the room, focus on others who are participating in the process. Remind yourself that even though you may not know others in the room, together you are making it possible to save many lives.

Bring a friend along with you

Join a friend or family member who has given blood before, or encourage a new donor to come with you so you can support each other.

Donating blood is a safe process

A sterile needle is used only once for each donor and then discarded. All donated blood is tested for infectious diseases before it can be released to hospitals.



Celebrate your success

When you finish the process, take some time to enjoy the feeling of accomplishment, knowing that you have helped save lives.

Find alternative ways to help

If you find that no matter how many strategies you try, you still cannot overcome your anxiety about the process, then commit to doing something different to help save a life. Sign up as an organ donor, volunteer to promote blood drives in your community, or encourage others to get involved. If you are unable to donate blood because a condition or life circumstance excludes you from being eligible to donate, you can still play a role. You can help promote a local blood drive, or can make a financial donation.

For additional information and help locating a blood donation site in your community, contact The American Red Cross www.redcross.org in the USA and <https://blood.ca> in Canada or contact Carebridge.

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Contact Carebridge at: **1.800.437.0911** or visit **www.myliferesource.com** for more information!