

**Excerpted from guidelines available at**  
[http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0\\_557\\_,00.html#hiv](http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0_557_,00.html#hiv)  
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**BLOOD DONATION ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES** Last updated: 3/21/05

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**Note to users:** Eligibility guidelines may have changed since this information was last updated. For current information, please contact the [American Red Cross blood region](#) nearest you.

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*Medical professionals are available at each blood collection center and details of each donor's health and activities are discussed in a confidential setting prior to blood donation. The final determination of eligibility is made at that time. Some donor eligibility rules are specified by the Food and Drug Administration for every blood bank in the country. Other rules are determined by the particular blood bank and may differ between programs. Donor eligibility rules are intended to protect the health and safety of the donor as well as the patient who will receive the transfusion. The criteria listed below are provided as guidelines to assist you in determining whether you may be eligible to be a blood donor. The guidelines listed below were last revised on **3/21/05**. There may have been some changes to these criteria since the last revision date. The most up to date eligibility information can be obtained by contacting the American Red Cross blood center nearest you.*

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

To give blood for transfusion to another person, you must be healthy, be at least 17 years old or 16 years old if allowed by state law, weigh at least 110 pounds, and not have donated blood in the last 8 weeks (56 days). "Healthy" means that you feel well and can perform normal activities. 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.

Other aspects of each potential donor's health history are discussed as part of the donation process before any blood is collected. Each donor receives a brief examination during which temperature, pulse, blood pressure and blood count (hemoglobin or hematocrit) are measured.

Making donations for your own use during surgery (autologous blood donation) is considered a medical procedure and the rules for eligibility are less strict than for regular volunteer donations.

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**Age**

You must be at least 17 years old to donate to the general blood supply, or 16 years old if allowed by state law. [Learn more about the reasons for a](#)

[lower age limit](#). There is no upper age limit for blood donation as long as you are well with no restrictions or limitations to your activities.

### **Blood Transfusion**

Wait for 12 months after receiving a blood transfusion from another person in the United States. You may not donate if you received a blood transfusion since 1980 in the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Channel Islands, Isle of Man), Gibraltar or Falkland Islands. This requirement is related to concerns about variant CJD, or 'mad cow' disease. [Learn more about variant CJD and blood donation](#).

You may not donate if you received a blood transfusion in certain countries in Africa since 1977. This requirement is related to concerns about rare strains of HIV that are not consistently detected by all current test methods. [Learn more about HIV Group O, and the specific African countries where it is found](#).

### **Cancer**

Eligibility depends on the type of cancer and treatment history. If you had leukemia or lymphoma, including Hodgkin's Disease, you are not eligible to donate. Other types of cancer are acceptable if the cancer has been treated successfully and it has been at least 5 years since treatment was completed and there has been no cancer recurrence in this time. Some low-risk cancers including squamous or basal cell cancers of the skin do not require a 5 year waiting period.

Precancerous conditions of the uterine cervix do not disqualify you from donation if the abnormality has been treated successfully. You should discuss your particular situation with the health historian at the time of donation.

### **Insulin**

Those who since 1980, received an injection of bovine (beef) insulin made from cattle from the United Kingdom are not eligible to donate. This requirement is related to concerns about variant CJD, or 'mad cow' disease. [Learn more about variant CJD and blood donation](#).

### **Hepatitis, Jaundice**

If you had hepatitis (inflammation of the liver) caused by a virus, or unexplained jaundice (yellow discoloration of the skin), since age 11, you are not eligible to donate blood. This includes those who had hepatitis with Cytomegalovirus (CMV), or Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV), the virus that causes Mononucleosis.

Acceptable if you had jaundice or hepatitis caused by something other than a viral infection, for example: medications, Gilbert's disease, bile duct obstruction, alcohol, gallstones or trauma to the liver.

If you ever tested positive for hepatitis B or hepatitis C , at any age, you are not eligible to donate, even if you were never sick or jaundiced from the infection.

### **Hepatitis Exposure**

If you live with or have had sexual contact with a person who has hepatitis, you must wait 12 months after the last contact.

Persons who have been detained or incarcerated in a facility (juvenile detention, lockup, jail, or prison) for more than 72 consecutive hours (3 days) are deferred for 12 months from the date of last occurrence. This includes work release programs and weekend incarceration. These persons are at higher risk for exposure to infectious diseases.

Wait 12 months after receiving a blood transfusion (unless it was your own "autologous" blood), non-sterile needle stick/body piercing or exposure to someone else's blood.

Wait 12 months following a human bite, if it broke the skin.

### **HIV, AIDS**

You should not give blood if you have AIDS or have ever had a positive HIV test, or if you have done something that puts you at risk for becoming infected with HIV.

You are at risk for getting infected if you:

- have ever used needles to take drugs, steroids, or anything not prescribed by your doctor
- are a male who has had sexual contact with another male, even once, since 1977
- have ever taken money, drugs or other payment for sex since 1977
- have had sexual contact in the past 12 months with anyone described above
- received clotting factor concentrates for a bleeding disorder such as hemophilia
- were born in, or lived in, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, or Nigeria, since 1977.
- since 1977, received a blood transfusion or medical treatment with a blood product in any of these countries, or
- had sex with anyone who, since 1977, was born in or lived in any of these countries. [Learn more about HIV Group O, and the specific African countries where it is found.](#)

You should not give blood if you have any of the following conditions that can be signs or symptoms of HIV/AIDS

- unexplained weight loss (10 pounds or more in less than 2 months)
- night sweats

- blue or purple spots in your mouth or skin
- white spots or unusual sores in your mouth
- lumps in your neck, armpits, or groin, lasting longer than one month
- diarrhea that won't go away
- cough that won't go away and shortness of breath, or
- fever higher than 100.5 F lasting more than 10 days.

### **Intravenous Drug Use**

Those who have ever used IV drugs that were not prescribed by a physician are not eligible to donate. This requirement is related to concerns about hepatitis and HIV...

### **Sexually Transmitted Disease**

Wait 12 months after treatment for syphilis or gonorrhea. Acceptable if it has been more than 12 months since you completed treatment for syphilis or gonorrhea. Chlamydia, venereal warts (human papilloma virus), or genital herpes are not a cause for deferral if you are feeling healthy and well and meet all other eligibility requirements.

### **Travel Outside of U.S., Immigration**

Wait 12 months after travel in an area where malaria is found. Wait 3 years after living in a country where malaria is found. Persons who have spent long periods of time in countries where "mad cow disease" is found are not eligible to donate. This requirement is related to concerns about variant Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease (vCJD). [Learn more about vCJD and donation](#). Persons who were born in or who lived in certain countries in Western Africa, or who have had close contact with persons who were born in or who lived in certain West African countries are not eligible to donate. This requirement is related to concerns about HIV Group O. [Learn more about HIV Group O, and the specific African countries where it is found](#).