

Do you know how it feels to save someone's life? The truth is, you don't have to be a police officer or a nurse to know this feeling. January is Blood Donor month and the perfect time to start helping to save lives! According to the American Red Cross, every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion and more than 41,000 blood donations are needed every day. This is why every blood donation is essential! In fact, one pint of blood can save up to three lives!

If you have never donated blood before, it can seem a little intimidating. Keep in mind that donating blood is a safe process. A sterile needle is used only once for each donor and then is discarded so, there is no risk of contracting blood borne illnesses through donation. Blood donation is a simple four-step process. Individuals begin with registration and demographic information. Then, a medical history and mini-physical are taken. The physical consists of blood pressure, body temperature, pulse and hemoglobin to ensure that it is safe for the donor to give blood. If it is determined that the volunteer is safe to donate, he/she may begin the actual donation process. This typically takes about ten to twelve minutes. After donation, donors are given tasty snacks and refreshments for recovery. The entire process, from the time you arrive to the time you leave, takes about an hour and fifteen minutes. Eating a good breakfast and drinking plenty of water before your appointment will make you feel much better during and after donation.

A healthy donor may donate red blood cells every fifty six days, or double red cells every 112 days. All donated blood is tested for HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and other infectious diseases before it can be released to hospitals for transfusions. All blood types are needed. However, Type O negative blood is the most requested blood type by hospitals. Type O negative blood is needed in emergencies because it can be given to anyone with any blood type.

If you have any questions about blood donation or would like to donate, visit the American Red Cross website at www.redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767). Don't miss your chance to save a life!