

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**American  
Red Cross**

Blood Services

[givebloodgivelife.org](http://givebloodgivelife.org)

## Give Blood and Help Maintain a Diverse Blood Supply

*Celebrate diversity with the Red Cross during Black History Month*

Rare blood types are found in all communities, regardless of ethnicity. However, many African Americans have blood types that are unique to their community. In addition, type O and type B blood is more prevalent in African Americans than in other populations. These factors taken together make it critical that African American donors give blood in order for the Red Cross to help all patients with special needs.

During the month of February, Black History Month, the American Red Cross recognizes and celebrates the critical contributions African Americans make by helping the Red Cross maintain a diverse base of regular blood donors for all patients in need of a transfusion.

“When it comes to donating blood, we mean it when we say we need all types, regardless of ethnicity, in order to meet patient needs,” said Dr. David Mair, medical director of the American Red Cross Blood Services. “Thank you to everyone for donating.”

Sickle cell anemia, a group of inherited red blood cell disorders, is another reason it is important for African Americans to be dedicated blood donors. Normal red blood cells become hard, sticky and shaped like a sickle. Symptoms of sickle cell anemia can begin as early as six months of age and can manifest as anemia, severe pain, infections of the blood, lungs or bones and stroke. One child suffering from strokes brought on by sickle cell disease may need 15-25 blood transfusions each year to prevent additional strokes.

This disease predominantly affects African American communities and requires repeated blood transfusions. Patients who receive regular transfusions require genetically matched donors to help reduce the risk of complications from the blood transfusion. Frequently, the best-matched blood comes from someone with the same ethnic background. The closer the match, the better the transfusion works for the patient. The Red Cross is committed to maintaining a diverse base of blood donors to help patients with serious medical need. Make a difference and make an appointment to give blood today.

### ***How to Donate Blood***

Simply call 1.800.GIVE.LIFE (1.800.448.3543) or visit [givebloodgivelife.org](http://givebloodgivelife.org) to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver’s license, or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Donors must be at least 17 years old (16 years old with a signed consent form in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska) and must weigh at least 110 pounds.

### ***About the Red Cross***

The Mid-America Division of the American Red Cross Blood Services supplies blood products to nearly 250 hospitals in 10 states and across the nation. The Red Cross relies on the generosity of more than 370,000 volunteer blood donors, nearly 8,300 blood drive coordinators and more than 2,100

employees to collect the blood that helps save thousands of lives each year. The Mid-America Division is one of nine Red Cross Blood Services Divisions located throughout the United States. Together, these divisions collect more than 40 percent of the nation's blood supply.

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