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## Our view: Need for blood donations is steady

Times Editorial Board

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The bridge collapse in Minneapolis a week ago today understandably inspired many people, including local folks, to give blood to the Red Cross.

Indeed, the Central Minnesota Chapter of the American Red Cross saw 69 blood donations Thursday and more than 60 Friday, totals that exceeded each daily goal of about 50. In addition, donation schedules this week are busier than normal.

Such generosity is not only welcome but very good news considering two things — summer is a slow time of year for blood donations and, more importantly, a new study shows that the number of eligible blood donors these days is far smaller than long believed.

That's right. As a Star Tribune report noted the day after the collapse, only about 37 percent of the U.S. population is allowed to donate blood under current guidelines, according to a new University of Minnesota study.

Previous estimates were that about 60 percent of Americans were eligible to give blood at any given time. Researchers put the new numbers this way: There are about 111 million Americans who could give blood, but 183 million cannot.

Add to that the estimate that not more than 7 percent of those eligible actually do donate and it's suddenly easy to see why the Red Cross seems to be facing a chronic shortage.

"That kind of explains why it's been so hard lately," said Beth Broman, executive director of the Central Minnesota. "It shows why we have to have a constant effort to recruit donors."

So why have the potential ranks of donors dropped so much?

Researchers cited the onset of AIDS epidemic about 20 years ago and the requirement to keep the blood supply safe.

Broman concurred and also noted how in that time there have been a growing number of restrictions on potential donors for everything from West Nile virus to international travel habits.

So what do you need to know about donating blood?

General guidelines from the Red Cross state you must be healthy, be at least 17 years old or age 16 if allowed by state law, weigh at least 110 pounds, and not have donated blood in the past 56 days or made a donation of double red cells in the past 111 days.

"Healthy" means you feel well and can perform normal activities. If you have a chronic condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, "healthy" also means you are being treated and the condition is under control.

It's important to note, though, that each potential donor's health history is discussed as part of the donation process.

For information on the medical and physical aspects of giving blood, visit [www.givebloodgivelife.org](http://www.givebloodgivelife.org). If, indeed, you are among the 37 percent of eligible donors, the Red Cross could use your help.

### DONATING BLOOD LOCALLY

The local chapter at 1301 West St. Germain St. boasts a new facility complete with more space and privacy and a huge parking area. Call 1.800.GIVE.LIFE (1-800-448-3543) to make an appointment. Please note the local chapter does not handle the scheduling of these appointments. Also, walk-ins are welcome. Hours are 1-7 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Fridays.

Atonement Lutheran Church, 1244-29th Ave. N, also hosts a Red Cross blood drive from 1:30-6:30 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month.

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