



**American  
Red Cross**

# BLOOD BULLETIN

## SAFETY OF THE BLOOD SUPPLY

As steward of almost half the nation's blood supply, the American Red Cross continually updates and refines procedures to ensure its inventory is safe. Many patients and their families are concerned about the risk of contracting disease through a transfusion. However, the blood supply is safer today than ever.

- All Red Cross blood donors are carefully screened for risk factors that would disqualify them from giving blood.
- The Red Cross follows five layers of safety procedures for donated blood: self-deferrals, completion of the blood donation record, health history screening, testing, and post-donation information.
- Multiple safeguards are built into the Red Cross' collection, processing and distribution systems to protect both blood donors and transfusion recipients:

**Volunteer Donors:** The Red Cross collects blood only from volunteer donors whose desire is to help other people.

**Donor Screening:** Every time a donor gives blood, the donor answers questions about his/her eligibility to donate and receives a mini-physical.

**Donor Deferral Registry:** The Red Cross maintains a national registry of ineligible donors. Donor Suitability staff check each blood donation against the Donor Deferral Registry.

**Comprehensive Testing:** Every unit of donated blood is tested for infectious diseases, including screenings for hepatitis (a liver infection), HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), HTLV-I (a virus associated with a rare form of leukemia), HTLV-II, Chagas disease, and syphilis.

- It's impossible to get AIDS by giving blood. A new, sterile needle is used for each blood donor and then discarded. The risk of contracting HIV from a blood transfusion is extremely low — less than .001 percent.
- In recent years, the Red Cross has added a new technology called nucleic acid testing (NAT). This new test can detect genetic material of hepatitis C and HIV potentially faster and more accurately than previous tests, which react to antibodies for those diseases.

If you have any pre- or post-eligibility donation questions, please call our Donor Care and Response Center toll free at **(800) 737-0902** or e-mail [wfdccrc@usa.redcross.org](mailto:wfdccrc@usa.redcross.org).

To schedule a blood donation appointment, please call 1-800 GIVE LIFE.  
For more information, visit [www.HelpSaveALife.org](http://www.HelpSaveALife.org)