



Advice From Alice -January 2009

Give the Gift of Life This Winter!

January has been designated as National Blood Donor Month. It is not often that donating an hour of our time can actually save a life. But that is what happens when we give blood. Because blood is so vital, our bodies nearly always make more than enough to meet our own needs. Donating some of our "spare" blood can literally save lives! Around the holidays, hospitals often experience a blood shortage.

People are just too busy to donate. Your donation can help to replenish this precious commodity. Won't you consider giving "the gift of life" this winter? There are many collection sites in Ontario County. Bloodmobiles travel to many worksites, schools, churches, and community organizations. Call the American Red Cross to find a donation site near you.

Give
Blood.

Who Can Give Blood?

Donors must be at least 17 years of age and weigh at least 110 pounds. Nearly all reasonably healthy adults can give blood. Even those who are take medications can usually give blood: it depends on the kind of medication you are taking. Just answer the questions asked of you at the blood donation site. They will screen you for conditions which would make you ineligible to give blood.

Who Cannot Give Blood?

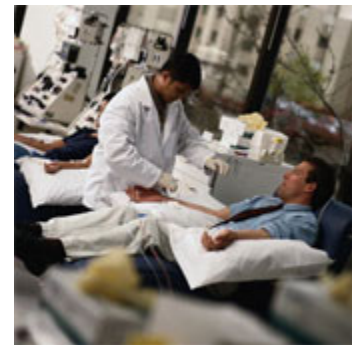
People who have certain blood borne diseases cannot give blood. Hepatitis and HIV are two examples. People who have lived abroad for three months or longer in countries where there have been human cases of Mad Cow Disease are also asked to refrain from giving blood. Also, those with immune deficiency diseases such as Lupus are asked to defer giving blood. Those with colds, sore throats or other acute infections should wait until they feel better. Those with other serious illnesses such as cancer or heart disease may also be ineligible to give blood, depending on their treatments. If you have questions about your own eligibility, check with the American Red Cross or the staff at your local blood drive.

What Is the Process for Giving Blood?

The actual process of blood donation is relatively simple. Each potential donor is asked a series of health questions that might indicate the need to postpone donation. They also have their temperature, pulse, and blood pressure taken. If all appears normal, they then have a tiny amount of blood taken from their finger to be sure that they have plenty of red blood cells to spare. Actual blood donation follows only after all of these preliminaries are found to be okay.

The blood sample and blood donation are both taken using brand-new, sterile equipment. During blood donation a needle is placed in one of the veins on the inside of the arm at the elbow. There is no way a donor can become infected with anything from these needles! (No need to fear hepatitis or HIV from giving blood!)

About one pint of blood is collected from each donor. The actual process of blood donation just takes a few minutes. Donors are then asked to sit quietly for a few moments and enjoy complimentary beverages and snacks.



Blood donors can repeat this process about once every two months. Repeat donors are actively encouraged. They are responsible for most blood donations. These regular donations keep the blood supply stocked for emergencies as well as for elective surgeries.

What Happens to the Blood After It Is Donated?

The donated blood is tested for certain diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Often, the blood is then "fragmented". Most people receiving blood need only some of the components of blood. Some may just need red blood cells; others may need plasma. A donation of whole blood contains several components. By separating them, many people can benefit from a single blood donation. The blood is then "typed" to determine who would be a good match for the donated



blood. There are four major blood types, A, B, AB, and O. The donor and the recipient need to have the same type. This blood matching will be confirmed again right before the blood is transfused in a process called cross-matching.

We all hope that we and our loved ones will never need a blood transfusion. But accidents happen, and some surgeries also require donated blood. By taking an hour of your time, you can help to meet this important need.

Why Give Blood? Because You Can Save Lives!

Prevention Is Power!