

Someone's *life* depends on *YOU*.

What donors want to know before they donate blood

How old do you have to be to donate blood?

You must be at least 17 years old and have picture identification to prove your age.

Are there any weight requirements?

Yes. You must weigh at least 110 pounds.

Is it safe to give blood?

Giving blood is very safe. All supplies are used only once, and your health is carefully checked before you are allowed to give. You cannot catch anything from giving blood.

Exactly what happens when I donate blood? What can I expect?

When you arrive at the blood drive, you will see that it is set up in a way that allows each VBS staff person to work with several blood donors at once. You will have a private place in which to answer the medical questions.

How much blood will they take from me?

About a pint. That is the amount that it is safe to give if you weigh at least 110 pounds. It will be collected in a plastic bag through a needle, both of which are used just once.

Suppose I hate needles?

Many people say they hate needles, but blood is such an important resource for sick people that it's worth a try for healthy people to get over that fear. The staff at the blood drive will do their best to make your experience as pleasant as possible.

A new, sterile, disposable needle and bag will be used for each blood donor. And the needle is as small as it can possibly be and still draw a pint of blood in no more than the mandated limit of 15 minutes.

One of my friends passed out while she was giving blood.

While this does happen sometimes, it is very infrequent and easy to prevent by eating a good breakfast and getting a good night's sleep before you donate.

Will my blood be tested?

Yes, all blood donations are tested to assure that they are as safe as possible for patients. Each donation is tested for these infectious diseases: HIV (the AIDS virus), syphilis, several types of hepatitis and West Nile Virus.

A small percentage of donations fail to pass one or more of these tests. These donations are destroyed and VBS notifies the donors.

If you should test positive for any infection, in order to maintain the confidentiality of your health information, we will contact you. If you are under 18 years of age, we encourage you to discuss the test results with your parents. VBS is required to report confirmed positive test results for syphilis and HIV (the AIDS virus) to the Virginia Department of Health.

How often can I give blood?

You may give whole blood every eight weeks. We hope you will make giving blood a habit. The lives of people in our community depend on you!



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Here are the steps in the donation process,
which takes about an hour:

1. Do not give blood on an empty stomach. Eat a good meal one to four hours before donating. This is especially important when giving for the first time.
2. You must present your picture ID. Then you will complete a form and be asked questions to make sure you are healthy enough to donate. This is for your safety and the safety of any patient who might receive your blood.
3. Your blood pressure, pulse rate, temperature and the iron content of your blood will be checked. If they are within acceptable limits, you are ready to give blood.
4. You will recline in a comfortable chair while your arm is cleaned with an antiseptic. Your blood will be drawn through a needle near the bend of your arm. The needle will feel something like a pinch going in, and the donation will take about ten minutes.
5. After donating, you should rest for five to ten minutes and enjoy a few refreshments.
6. Don't skip meals and drink plenty of liquids for the next 24 hours. Don't lift anything heavy with the arm you donated from. Leave your bandage on for four to six hours. Your normal volume of blood will be restored within 24 hours of donating.

Share your good health with others!

