

## How old do you have to be to donate blood?

You must be at least 16 years old and have written parental consent.

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## Are there any weight requirements?

You must weigh at least 110 pounds.

## Do I need my parents' permission to give blood?

Under Virginia state law, if you are 16 years old, you must have written parental consent to give blood. If you are 17 years old, you are not required to have parental permission under state law, but some school systems will require that you have your parents' permission to donate during school hours. Virginia Blood Services will provide you with a permission slip, which is also available on our web site.



## 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 you 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 giving 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.



## I'm an athlete—my coach told me not to give blood.

The human body carries more hemoglobin than it needs. You need to be well-hydrated before and after giving blood. Wait 24 hours after giving blood to engage in strenuous activity.



### 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 will 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 10 minutes.



5. After donating, you will rest for five to ten minutes and enjoy refreshments.

6. Don't skip meals and drink plenty of liquids for the next 24 hours. Don't lift anything heavy—including backpacks—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.



## 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, not your parents. But we will 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.





The information in this brochure was requested by high school students who participated in research conducted for Virginia Blood Services (VBS) by a team from the Leadership Metro Richmond Class of 2003.

If after reading this brochure you still have questions, call VBS at (804) 213-4214 or (800) 989-2201.



### What is Virginia Blood Services?

Virginia Blood Services is the nonprofit organization that collects blood donations at your school and supplies blood for patients in all of the 22 hospitals in Richmond, Charlottesville, the Staunton/Waynesboro area, Harrisonburg, Hopewell, Petersburg, South Hill, Farmville and Emporia.

Because so many advanced medical treatments are available in this region, patients require an average of 380 blood donations each day.

While 60 percent of the population is eligible to give blood, less than 5 percent actually do.

VBS collects, tests, processes and distributes blood donated by more than 50,000 different people each year. VBS conducts 2,000 blood drives and operates eight centers where you may give blood: four in Richmond, two in Charlottesville, one in the Staunton/Waynesboro area and one in Harrisonburg.

### How does blood save lives?



According to Dr. Harvey Klein, Chief of Transfusion Medicine at the National Institutes of Health, "In the last century, transfusions have saved more lives than any therapy except antibiotics."

Donated blood saves lives in several ways, because it is separated into its parts before being transfused to patients. Each part has a different lifesaving property. Your donation can help save three or more people by replacing blood or blood functions lost to illness, surgery or trauma.

Red cells carry oxygen to the body's tissues and are needed during many surgeries. Platelets

help blood clot in patients whose clotting ability has been affected by leukemia or chemotherapy. Plasma is the nutrient-rich fluid that travels with blood cells through the body—it too helps with clotting. *There are still no substitutes for blood.*

### Who needs blood?

People of all ages can need blood transfusions to save their lives. Older people usually need it during heart surgery or cancer treatment. Teens can need it for many reasons, including accidents or lifelong illnesses such as sickle cell anemia. Babies may need it as soon as they are born.

Blood must be on the shelf when disaster strikes—afterwards is too late!

### I've heard that some high schools have a lot of HIV cases.

Nearly every year, across America, rumors spring up after high school blood drives. No one knows how they start, but they assert that dozens of students who gave blood at a high school blood drive have tested positive for HIV/AIDS.

The rumors may start when, for reasons such as having low iron or taking acne medication, some students are not allowed to donate.

In every community, the rumors about high numbers of students testing positive for HIV/AIDS have always been false. In fact, Virginia has a very, very low incidence of AIDS infection among teens. If you hear such a rumor, we would appreciate your alerting us by calling (804) 213-4214 or (800) 989-2201.



**Share your good health with others.  
Give blood when a blood drive comes to your school.**

**For more information, see:**

[www.vablood.org](http://www.vablood.org)

[www.americasblood.org](http://www.americasblood.org)

[www.aabb.org](http://www.aabb.org)

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

**What  
high school  
students want to  
know before  
they give blood  
and save  
lives.**

*8 percent of our community's  
blood supply comes from high  
school students!*

