

COVID-19 & Blood Donation

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus that originated in China in December 2019. The illness causes symptoms like fever, cough and shortness of breath, but can be severe in some at-risk populations.

2. How do I keep from getting COVID-19?

COVID-19 is generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets like the common flu, so observing everyday preventative actions for respiratory diseases is critical: stay home if you're sick, practice good sneeze/cough etiquette, wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer, and regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

3. Will I be safe while donating blood?

Yes. Although we collect blood and blood products, we're not a medical facility and ask only healthy donors to visit these locations to donate.

4. Is COVID-19 dangerous for blood donors?

No, the CDC has found no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through the blood or blood donations.

5. Can COVID-19 be transmitted through blood donation?

No, the CDC has found no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted either through a blood exposure or a blood donation. In similar respiratory illness outbreaks like SARS or MERS, no evidence of transmissions through blood products was seen.

6. Do you screen blood for COVID-19?

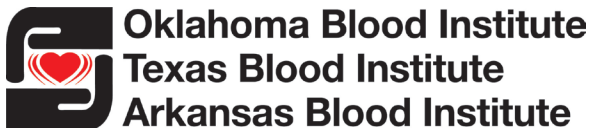
We don't test for this illness, as the FDA has no approved screening test for blood donors and the illness is not shown to be transmitted through blood. Our testing laboratory is on the forefront of technology and conducts more than a dozen tests on each sample to ensure its safety.

7. Do you have safety procedures in place for your donor centers and blood drives?

Our operating procedures meet strict FDA regulations and OSHA standards to ensure workplace safety. We encourage all staff, volunteers and donors to take routine preventative actions – as recommended by the CDC – to help prevent the spread of acute respiratory illnesses, like the seasonal flu and COVID-19. We've added additional cleaning procedures, shifted our donation areas to allow for social distancing and are taking the temperatures of each donor and employee who enter our donor areas to ensure they're feeling well.

8. Should donors wait to donate blood because of COVID-19?

No, please donate blood or platelets as you're able. Blood is a perishable product that requires continual donations to ensure a healthy supply.



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9. What is the organization doing about COVID-19?

Your Blood Institute's executive management and medical staff have been monitoring the rapidly changing situation of COVID-19 since the first reported case in December 2019. We have been using resources within our blood organization's networks of BCA (Blood Centers of America), ABC (America's Blood Centers), and AABB (formerly American Associations of Blood Banks). In addition, we have been monitoring situation reports from the CDC and WHO, along with updates from the state public health departments in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas to track the local, regional, and national developments of COVID-19.

10. Who do I call if I have questions about the coronavirus or blood donation?

If you have questions about COVID-19, please contact your state's health agency: the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 877-215-8336; Texas Department of State Health Services at 211, option 6; or Arkansas Department of Health at 800-803-7847. If you have questions about your planned blood donation, please contact our customer service line at 877-340-8777.

11. Has anything like this ever happened before? What were the results?

In the past, acute respiratory illness outbreaks like SARS (2002), H1N1 flu (2009), and MERS (2012) were contained due to prevention measures, public health interventions, medical detection, isolation and care of patients. In these outbreaks, no evidence was seen of blood transmission by the viruses. COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus, so research is ongoing into this virus's specific transmission and effects in humans.

12. Are you observing social distancing?

Donor centers and mobile blood drives have been adjusted to allow space for social distancing. On bloodmobiles, staff are placing donors to allow for maximum distance between visitors. In addition, we strongly encourage appointments to be made to help us manage how many donors are present at one time.

13. How are you making sure staff and donors are healthy?

As always, we ask only healthy staff and donors to come to our centers and mobile units. In addition, we screen all donor services staff at the beginning of their shift, taking temperatures to ensure no one has a fever or feels ill. All donors will also have their temperature taken before entering the blood donor area, so only healthy donors enter.

14. Should we be donating blood right now?

Yes! Donating blood is an essential health care activity and is critical to avoiding a blood supply crisis. For those wanting to help but don't know where to start, donating blood is a safe and easy way to protect our communities in a time of need.