

U.S. blood donors needed in face of COVID-19 crisis

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(HealthDay)—As concerns about the new coronavirus escalate, the

American Red Cross urges healthy, eligible people to give blood or platelets to help prevent blood shortages.

"We're asking the American people to help keep the blood supply stable during this challenging time. As communities across the country prepare for this public health emergency, it's critical that plans include a readily available blood supply for [hospital patients](#)," said Chris Hrouda, president of Red Cross Blood Services.

Due to fears of coronavirus infection, low donor participation could harm blood availability at hospitals, Hrouda added in an agency news release.

"The last thing a patient should worry about is whether lifesaving blood will be on the shelf when they need it most," Hrouda said.

There is an especially urgent need for [blood donors](#) with type O blood and for all platelet donors.

The nation's blood supply has already declined due to cold and flu season. And as cases of COVID-19 increase, fewer donors may be eligible to give blood, according to the Red Cross.

There is no evidence that the new coronavirus is transmissible by blood transfusion. And there are no reports of any respiratory virus, including the coronavirus, being transmitted from a transfusion, the Red Cross noted.

Even so, the Red Cross said it has implemented new blood donation deferrals out of an abundance of caution. People are asked to postpone giving blood for 28 days after: travel to China, Hong Kong, Macau, Iran, Italy or South Korea; diagnosis of COVID-19; or contact with a person who has or is suspected to have the virus.

The Red Cross said it will continue to evaluate the situation with U.S. health officials to determine if more safety measures are needed.

The Red Cross only collects [blood](#) from people who are healthy and feeling well at the time of donation, and who meet other eligibility requirements.

More information: The American Red Cross has more on [giving blood](#).

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