

Big need for blood donations as postponed surgeries resume

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(HealthDay)—As U.S. hospitals resume procedures put on hold by the

coronavirus outbreak, there's an urgent need for blood and platelet donations, the American Red Cross says.

Following a sharp decline in demand for blood products that began in early April, hospitals' needs have recently spiked 30%.

"Blood donors are essential to ensuring the continued health of their community by making sure hospitals have a readily available supply of blood products for patients," said Chris Hrouda, president of the American Red Cross Biomedical Services. "Blood cannot be stockpiled like other medical supplies and must be constantly replenished."

Hrouda said the Red Cross is grateful to the tens of thousands of donors who rolled up a sleeve to help early on.

Though hospitals have resumed surgeries and treatments that were paused in response to COVID-19, many blood drives continue to be canceled as businesses and [community groups](#) remain closed, Hrouda said in a Red Cross news release. He said this has hampered the Red Cross's ability to collect nearly 13,000 blood and more than 2,600 platelet donations needed at U.S. hospitals and transfusion centers.

The Red Cross said it's urgently seeking donors and hosts for blood drives to ensure blood products are readily available for patients.

"During this crisis, we're all in this together," Hrouda said.

To make an appointment to donate, go to the American Red Cross website, use its [donor](#) app, call 800-RED-CROSS, or activate the blood scheduling skill for Alexa. Donors are asked to schedule an appointment before they arrive at a [blood](#) drive and must wear a face covering.

Everyone who donates through May 31 will receive a Red Cross T-shirt,

while supplies last. Those who donate in June will receive a \$5 Amazon.com gift card.

Red Cross [blood drives](#) and donation centers follow strict safety and infection control measures.

The news release said those steps include checking temperatures of staff and donors; providing hand sanitizer and routinely disinfecting surfaces, equipment and areas that donors touch; keeping donors socially distanced; ensuring staff and donors wear face coverings and that staffers wear gloves and change them frequently; and using sterile collection sets and an aseptic scrub for every donation.

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

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