

# More diverse pool of blood donors needed to help sickle cell patients

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A network that receives and supplies blood for transfusions nationwide

is calling for more diverse blood donors.

Less than 20% of [blood donations](#) are from people of color, but those donations are essential. Frequently transfused patients often require blood from donors with similar ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Those who need frequent transfusions include people with [sickle cell disease](#), an inherited blood disorder that affects about 100,000 people nationwide. It occurs in 1 of every 365 African-American births. One in 3 African-American blood donors is a match for a sickle cell patient.

"Sickle cell patients rely on a diverse and available blood supply to treat the effects of this disease and mitigate complications. Less than 20% of all blood donations come from communities of color today," Kate Fry, chief executive officer at [America's Blood Centers](#), said in an organization news release. This network provides 60% of the U.S. blood supply and a quarter of that in Canada.

September is [Sickle Cell Awareness Month](#), a yearly call to build a more diverse blood supply.

Sickle cell disease causes [red blood cells](#) to have a sickle or crescent shape, causing episodes of extreme pain. Patients, who often have chronic anemia, require frequent [blood transfusions](#).

"One of the most important ways we can help is by giving blood," said Regina Hartfield, president and CEO of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America.

Only about 3% of the U.S. population donates blood each year, according to America's Blood Centers.

"Individuals living with [sickle cell disease](#) urgently need a safe and

reliable blood supply to manage their health year-round," said Tessa Youngner, a program specialist at the Sickle Cell Disease Coalition.

"However, many Americans are unaware of this need, and of the fact that the genealogy and ethnicity of donors affects the success of blood transfusions delivered to people living with sickle cell," Youngner said in the release. "National Sickle Cell Awareness Month is a powerful opportunity to spread awareness and inspire new, more diverse blood donors to lend an arm and join the fight to conquer [sickle cell](#)."

**More information:** The American Red Cross has more about [blood donation](#).

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