

Can blood donors suffer iron deficiency?

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With the constant need for blood and platelet donations, frequent, regular blood donors are crucial to having a continuous national blood supply. Across Mayo Clinic in Rochester, for example, anywhere between 50 and 70 units of red cells and between 20 and 30 units of platelets are used daily to help save lives.

Could donating frequently lead to problems, such as iron deficiency, for the donors? Donating [red blood cells](#) removes iron from the body. Iron is an essential component of hemoglobin, which helps maintain strength and energy.

Dr. Justin Juskewitch, associate medical director of the Blood Donor Center at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, says it is possible for frequent red [blood](#) cell donors to suffer [iron deficiency](#), if the right steps aren't taken.

"We do know in our frequent blood donors across the [nation](#) that if they don't work on supplementing their iron through their diet, or through multivitamins, that they can become iron deficient over time," says Dr. Juskewitch.

He says that's one of the reasons the Mayo Clinic Blood Donor Center asks that people only donate whole blood every 12 weeks.

"We know it takes time for the body to reabsorb the iron to make those new red cells."

As part of the blood donation process, donors are given information about sources of [iron](#) to help replenish those cells they've given to someone else.

How to give more, safely

If donors do want to bolster the number of donations they can give to their communities, Dr. Juskewitch says it is safe to mix and match donations.

"If you donated a whole blood today, you can't donate another whole blood for 12 weeks. But you could then come in and donate platelets

eight days later because that's on a different cycle. So, we have donors who only donate whole blood, but they can come in in between and donate platelets. And then when that 12 weeks comes up, they can donate another whole blood," says Dr. Juskewitch.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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