

Critical blood shortages because of COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic is creating critical blood shortages in the U.S.

"It's not due to more COVID-19 patients needing blood products. Rather, it's a lack of donations coming in," says Dr. Justin Kreuter, transfusion medicine specialist with the Mayo Clinic Blood Donor Center.

"Our collections have really plummeted because of the concerns about being out in the community," he explains. "We're used to living at a one-to two-week [blood](#) inventory. Now a lot of the country is living at a one-to two-day inventory and it's challenging to look at what our future holds."

The pandemic has led to the cancellation of various community and office blood drives that many blood banks rely heavily on. Beyond that, people are practicing social distancing and being told to avoid large crowds in public spaces. Dr. Kreuter says he wants to assure people that there is no risk of getting COVID-19 from donating blood and that it is safe for healthy people to come to a blood [donor](#) center.

"It's only people who are healthy—who are not quarantined—who should be going to their blood donor center," says Dr. Kreuter. "These blood collection centers are very clean. By regulations, this is a very [clean environment](#), because we have to ensure the quality of the blood that's collected for patient care."

Dr. Kreuter says this urgent need for blood is unlike shortages in the past. To get past this and through the [summer months](#), when the [blood supply](#) is historically low, it's crucial that healthy, eligible donors give blood donation a chance and make it a habit.

"We're going to need a massive turnout from people who have not donated or have not donated for a long time to come out and donate. It's going to be something that persists beyond just this week. It's going to persist throughout this whole pandemic. Patients are still going to need

cancer treatment. Patients are still going to need emergent open-heart surgery. Premature babies are still going to be born, and we really want to still give them that chance at life," says Dr. Kreuter.

"That's going to make a huge difference and not force us to making those really challenging, ethical decisions about those units of blood, those last units that are on the shelf, does that go to the premature baby, or does that go to the mother who was just in a car accident?"

To find out if you are eligible to give blood and find out where you can donate check the Mayo Clinic Blood Donor Program website.

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