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## **Coronavirus Impact on Blood Supply: Giving Blood Is Safe Healthy Blood Donors Are Urgently Needed for Hospital Patients**

SACRAMENTO, CA 3/9/20 – Amidst novel coronavirus (COVID-19) prevention measures, Vitalant and other blood centers nationwide are urging healthy individuals to donate blood—and organizations to maintain scheduled blood drives—to ensure patients have the lifesaving blood they need.

**Healthy people are strongly encouraged to make a blood donation appointment by calling 877-25-VITAL (877-258-4825) or going online to [vitalant.org](https://www.vitalant.org).**

Public health officials are enacting a number of measures to limit COVID-19—and Vitalant supports these initiatives. Blood centers have always required individuals to be in good health to donate blood, and the blood collection process follows policies established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure the health and safety of donors and patients.

“Hospitals will be extremely challenged if COVID-19 infections increase. The last thing we want them worrying about is having enough blood for trauma victims and cancer patients. That’s why it’s imperative that healthy individuals donate blood at drives and blood donation sites now,” said Dr. Ralph Vassallo, Vitalant’s chief medical and scientific officer.

Representing all blood banks, the AABB (formerly the American Association of Blood Banks) Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism recently urged healthy individuals to make and keep donation appointments—and ensure blood drives continue.

Currently, all blood types and components are needed, with a significant need for platelets and type O blood donations. Platelets have a very short shelf life—only five days. Type O-negative blood is the universal blood type, frequently used in traumas, that can help stabilize all patients. Vitalant strives to maintain a 4-day supply of blood just to provide what patients need, and currently we’re at less than half that for many blood types.

In addition to barring non-healthy individuals from donating, Vitalant is alerting individuals not to donate if they have visited Mainland China, South Korea, Iran and Italy within 28 days, have had a COVID-19 infection, or been exposed to someone suspected of having a COVID-19 infection. [View the most up-to-date donation eligibility information.](#)

“According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the risk of contracting COVID-19 is currently low,” Vassallo said. “Furthermore, due to the nature of the virus, it is highly unlikely that it can be transmitted through blood transfusions.”

The blood collection process is safe. In addition to the vigorous FDA-mandated testing of all blood components donated, Vitalant staff follow rigorous safety and disinfection protocols at its blood drives and donation centers. Finally, giving blood has no impact on the donor’s immune system.

“Sick hospital patients rely on blood donors—there is no other source for blood,” Vassallo said. “We need healthy individuals to donate blood, while following guidance from the CDC and other agencies.”

COVID-19 transmission occurs like the spread of the flu (influenza). And although there is currently no vaccine for COVID-19, to reduce the risk of infection, the CDC recommends washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and avoiding touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Vitalant is closely monitoring the situation and will quickly implement any necessary changes as new information emerges from the CDC, FDA and AABB.



#### About Vitalant

*Vitalant ("Vye-TAL-ent") is the nation's second largest community blood service provider, supplying comprehensive transfusion medicine services for nearly 1,000 hospitals and health care partners for patients in need across 40 states. Vitalant inspires local communities to serve the needs of others and transform lives through the selfless act of donating blood. Every day, almost 5,000 blood donations are needed to meet the needs of people throughout the country, and Vitalant's 800,000 donors supply 1.8 million donations a year. In addition to blood products, Vitalant offers customers transfusion services, medical consulting, quality guidance, ongoing education, research and more. For more information and to schedule a donation, visit [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org) or call 877-25-VITAL (877-258-4825). Join the conversation about impacting the lives of others on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*

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