

## June 14: Blood donation Day

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Every year, at least 20,000 Indians die from the unavailability of blood. There are only about eight voluntary blood donors for every 1,000 people. The COVID pandemic has made the situation worse.



### Introduction

Imagine for a moment that someone is in a life- or-death situation and the only thing standing in between is a timely supply of blood. Wouldn't this situation be heartbreaking?

Blood serves the same function in our bodies as fuel does in vehicles. Fuel can be manufactured. However, blood obtained from human donors is only used in transfusions. There is literally no alternative to human blood that can be used. Every donation can help save at least three lives by separating into components: red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets, and plasma.

Every year on June 14th, countries across the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day. The event serves to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products, to thank voluntary donors for their life-saving gift of blood and to support national blood transfusion services and various organizations in strengthening their blood donor programs through campaigns and blood camps.

On the birth anniversary of Karl Landsteiner, World Blood Donor Day is commemorated. This Austrian immunologist won the Nobel Prize in 1930 for his work on the ABO blood type system. This breakthrough allowed doctors to safely perform blood transfusions.

This day was organized for the first time in 2005 as a joint initiative of the World Health Organization and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and is one of 11 official global public health campaigns marked by the WHO.

### Busting myths about blood donation

- **IT IS PAINFUL:** Really, are you afraid of needles? It's just a tiny pin-prick

- **IT IS TIME CONSUMING:** The entire process, including registration, donation and refreshments, in total takes 45 minutes to an hour. Can't we spare an hour for a noble cause?
- **DONORS BECOME OBESE:** The process has no effect on your weight unless you decide overindulge in junk after donation. My friend, who is at fault for obesity- you or the donation process?
- **PEOPLE WHO WEIGH HEAVIER AND NOT LIGHTER ARE ELIGIBLE:** As long as you are above 45 kg, you are eligible. Stop making lame excuses.
  - **DIABETICS CAN'T DONATE**— As long as your sugar level is controlled with lifestyle/pills you can. You cannot donate only if you are on insulin
  - **BLOOD DONATION IS NOT FOR WOMEN:** Do you really believe blood has to do something with gender? Yes, women bleed every month and have low Hb. Ooh! So my dear, God made women naturally survive this way and replenish their blood lost every month. Girls are not at all at higher risk than men. Girls, stop making excuses.
  - **DONOR IS EXPOSED TO INFECTIONS:** Sterile needles are used and discarded after single use. So, no chance of infection via needles
  - **ONE DAY REST IS NEEDED AFTER DONATION, SO IT WILL AFFECT OUR DAILY ROUTINE AND MAKE US WEAK :** You can resume your routine activities right after donation, unless you take plenty of fluids and healthy food for 24 hours.
  - **HIGH BP PATIENT CAN'T DONATE:** You can, as long as your BP is below 180/100. BP medications do not interfere with donation
  - **IF YOU SMOKE/TAKE ALCOHOL, YOU CAN'T DONATE:** Avoid smoking for 3 hours after donation and stay away from alcohol for 24 hours prior to donation

### **Guidelines from the National Blood Transfusion Council**

#### **Who can donate blood?**

- Afebrile
- Between the ages 18 and 65 years
- Weight more than or equal to 45 kg
- Hb more than or equal to 12.5g/dl
- systolic BP 100-140 mm Hg and diastolic BP 60-90 mm Hg at the time of donation
- Males are eligible to donate whole blood every 3 months, and females become eligible after 4 months of their last donation
- Platelets can be donated every 48 hours

#### **Who should not donate?**

- Who do not meet the above criteria.
- Cold, sore throat, or stomach infection at the time of donation
- Defer for about 1 year from the date of the tattoo
- Defer for 24 hours if someone visited a dentist for a minor procedure but defer for 6 months after tooth extraction.
- Defer for 24 hours from the last alcohol intake.
- Avoid donating during menstruation, pregnancy, breast feeding, major surgery in the last 12 months, having a cardiovascular disease, or epilepsy.
- Defer the donor if one is on insulin, antiarrhythmic, anti-thyroid drugs, or cytotoxic drugs.
- Permanently defer if a person engages in "at-risk" sexual behavior, has tested positive for HIV/Hepatitis in the past, or has ever injected drugs.

**What to suggest after the donation?**

- Drink lots of healthy beverages within 24 to 48 hours of blood donation.
- Take ample rest and do not indulge in physical activity for a day or two.
- Have healthy food to combat fatigue.
- Use an icepack on the bruised area of the needle.