Blood Essay, Research Paper

There is a crisis. It is the shortage of blood. We need more blood donors.

There’s no substitute for human blood — vital for delivering oxygen and nutrients, removing waste, healing and fighting infection. A person’s blood can, however, be shared with others.

Every day, thousands of Americans in need of lifesaving blood, including trauma victims and surgery patients, rely on the efforts of volunteer blood donors.

We need a steady flow of blood donors to keep our blood supply stable. Many people are eligible to be donors. The biggest requirement is being healthy.

Approximately 4 million Americans receive donated blood each year; a demand of nearly 40,000 units each day.

Donating blood is a simple, relatively painless procedure that requires a small time commitment. Understanding the steps involved with donating can make it easier for those who may be considering rolling up their sleeves.

In addition to good health, blood donors must weigh at least 110 pounds, be at least 18 years of age or be 16 and have parental permission. Those who are currently taking any medications such as aspirin, allergy medication, sleeping pills and Tylenol are still eligible to donate, as are those who have received a hepatitis B vaccine.

People who cannot donate include anyone who has a blood-borne disease or who might be at high risk of contracting one. Other conditions excluding potential donors are being pregnant, having low iron or having a cold or the flu.

There is no charge for blood. And prior to donating, volunteers must complete a standard screening procedure. This includes filling out a questionnaire on health history and answering standard health screening questions. Donors will then receive a brief physical exam, which includes reading of temperature, pulse and a test for anemia.

Donors who satisfy screening requirements will then have approximately one pint of blood extracted. The entire process usually lasts about 45 minutes. Donating blood takes only from 5 to 7 minutes.

Giving blood is safe. No one gets any disease by donating. A sterile needle is used once for each donor and then destroyed.

Blood donors can usually resume normal activities within 10 to 15 minutes after donating. It’s recommended that a person first sit down, rest momentarily and consume liquids. Since a person’s blood volume will be reduced by 10 percent from donating blood, it is also recommended that volunteers avoid strenuous physical activities immediately following.

Fluids lost from donating blood are usually replenished within 24 hours, while it can take several weeks to replace lost red blood cells. Because of this, volunteers must wait eight weeks between donation times. To avoid bruising in the arm, donors should also steer clear of heavy lifting for several hours.

Some people feel afraid the first time they donate. You?ll find out your fears are exaggerated. But you?ll find it out only after you?ve donated.

Some people think that they don?t have blood to spare. The average adult body has about 10 to 12 pints of blood. You give one pint of blood when you make a whole blood donation, and your blood volume will be replaced within 24 hours.

Some people say that it?s too inconvenient to donate blood. Simply make an appointment for the time that?s convenient for you. If the blood center isn?t convenient for you, just call a recruitment department and they?ll find a blood mobile that is. Usually churches, businesses, schools and civic organizations in your community host bloodmobiles every day of the week.

Most often some people say that they?ll only give in an emergency situation. It can take 24-48 hours to complete the laboratory tests that must be done on every unit of blood. Blood must be donated before an emergency arises. It?s simply not feasible to try to save your blood in case someone you know needs it. Currently less than 5% of those eligible to give blood actually do. The demand for blood and blood products is constantly increasing, and those increasing needs can only be met by an increasing amount of donors.

More blood donations are needed now than at any other time in our nation?s history. The American Red Cross had recently reported that there has been a critical shortage of blood and has forced the cancellation of elective surgeries in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Both the Red Cross and America?s Blood Centers, which together represent virtually all U.S. blood banks, reported severe shortages at a season when blood supplies are usually adequate.

Blood is a fragile product and cannot be stored indefinitely in its liquid state. To make sure there is always enough blood for patients, healthy members of the community must donate regularly. As long as healthy volunteer donors keep replenishing the community blood supply, there will always be enough blood for you, your family, your friends, or anyone who needs a transfusion.

Giving blood is the right thing to do. You can make the difference. The difference you make is life itself.