

## Keep in mind

- We exclude potential donors with flu by expecting that they feel healthy and well, they have a normal temperature, they are not short of breath, or coughing productively. The same measures will apply to those with COVID-19.
- No cases of Coronavirus or flu virus have been linked to blood exposure. Instead, we protect ourselves and our donors by clean hands and gloves, clean work surfaces and covering coughs and sneezes. Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands, too.
- We are regularly communicating with national and regional preparedness groups, the FDA and blood industry so that we can respond appropriately as the situation changes.

## Measures Implemented

- Staff are taking additional measures to ensure we are following and enhancing our cleanliness protocols for all surfaces and equipment.
  - Donor beds are sanitized after every donation, along with equipment and surfaces.
- We have discontinued the use of reusable apheresis blankets and replaced them with a disposable alternative.
- One-time use squeeze balls/ handgrips for the donors to use and take with them when they leave the blood drive.
- Additional hand sanitizers have been issued to every blood donation location as well as individual bottles for each employee to routinely use.
- Phlebotomy staff use hand sanitizer between every process and every donor.
- All staff will have their temperature taken each day prior to donor engagement.
- Allow 6 feet of separation between donor beds for inside set-up mobile drives.

## MYTH vs FACT

**Also Found:** [http://www.giveblood.org/mythbusters-the-truth-about-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)/](http://www.giveblood.org/mythbusters-the-truth-about-coronavirus-(covid-19)/)

### **Mythbusters: The truth about coronavirus (COVID-19)**

As the coronavirus outbreak continues to spread in the United States, Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center wants to make sure donors have the facts.

Healthy people must regularly donate to minimize disruptions to the blood supply and ensure blood is available for patients. Since it is the blood already on the shelves that saves lives, maintaining a sufficient blood supply is essential to ensure patients in need receive treatment. If you are feeling healthy and well, we strongly encourage you to schedule and keep blood donations regularly to help patients in our local hospitals.

**MYTH:** Donating blood during this time is unsafe.

**FACT:** No cases of coronavirus or flu virus have been linked to blood exposure. Instead, we protect ourselves and our donors by maintaining clean hands, wearing gloves, cleaning work surfaces and covering coughs and sneezes.

The coronavirus does not pose any risk to blood donors, either during the donation process or while attending organized blood drives. Given this information, the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have not recommended blood centers take any additional action at this time.

The AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism, in coordination with the country's blood collection establishments, has been monitoring the evolving public health situation and preparing for potential further spread. Brian Gannon, President and CEO at The Blood Center chairs this task force. The Blood Center's staff makes safety a top priority, emphasizing best practices by maintaining sterile equipment and prioritizing cleanliness and donor safety.

**MYTH:** We don't need to worry about the blood supply at this time.

**FACT:** To ensure an adequate blood supply healthy, eligible donors must donate blood so that an adequate blood supply can be maintained at all times. We strongly encourage all healthy donors and sponsors of blood drives to schedule appointments and keep commitments to donate blood.

Blood has a short shelf life and must be continually replenished. Blood donors must be healthy, feeling well and free of respiratory illness symptoms to be eligible to donate.

**MYTH:** The Blood Center is not screening for the coronavirus.

**FACT:** Routine blood donor screening measures—which may include travel deferrals—that are already in place prevents individuals with clinical respiratory infections from donating blood. We exclude potential donors with flu by expecting that they feel healthy and well, they have a normal temperature, they are not short of breath, or coughing productively. The same measures apply to those with coronavirus disease.

We ask anyone who does not feel healthy and well to wait until they have fully recovered to donate blood.

AABB, FDA and CDC are not recommending any action by blood collection establishments at this time because there are no data or precedent suggesting risk of transfusion transmission for COVID-19.

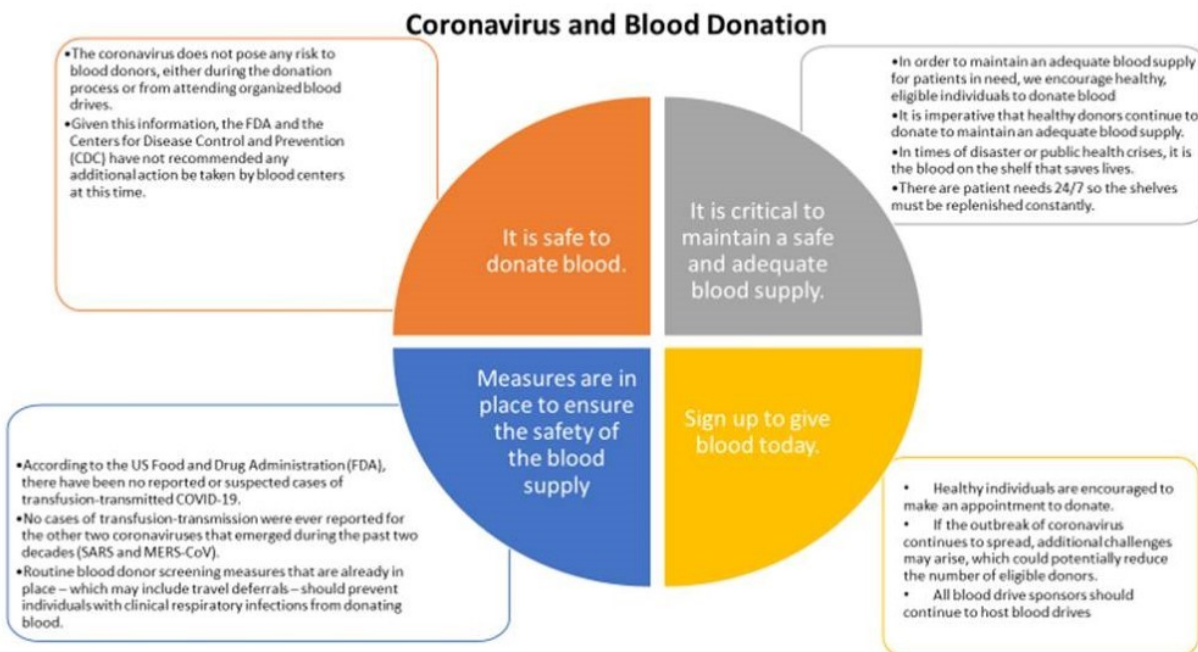
**MYTH:** Coronavirus affects blood transfusions.

**FACT:** According to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there have been no reported or suspected cases of transfusion-transmitted COVID-19.

This is not the first time we've seen the spread of a strain of the coronavirus disease. No cases of transfusion-transmission were ever reported for the other two coronaviruses (SARS and MERS-CoV) that emerged during the past two decades.

AABB, FDA and CDC are not recommending any action by blood collection establishments at this time because there are no data or precedent suggesting risk of transfusion transmission for COVID-19.

If you are feeling and healthy and well but still have questions about donating, please contact our Donor Advocates at [cs@giveblood.org](mailto:cs@giveblood.org) or (713) 791-6373.



## What you need to know about coronavirus and blood donation.

(Same as chart above – just in text format)

### It is safe to donate blood.

- The coronavirus does not pose any risk to blood donors, either during the donation process or from attending organized blood drives.

- We protect ourselves and our donors with clean hands and gloves, clean work surfaces and donation area before and after every donor.
- According to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there have been no reported or suspected cases of transfusion-transmitted COVID-19.
- Given this information, the FDA and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have not recommended any additional action be taken by blood centers at this time.

**Measures are in place to ensure the safety of the blood supply.**

- No cases of transfusion-transmission were ever reported for the other two coronaviruses that emerged during the past two decades (SARS and MERS-CoV).
- Routine blood donor screening measures that are already in place – which may include travel deferrals – should prevent individuals with clinical respiratory infections from donating blood.
- During the screening process, it is standard procedure to check that donors feel healthy and well, they have a normal temperature, they are not short of breath, or coughing productively. The same measures will apply to those with COVID-19.
- Blood drive staff manages the donation site by spacing out donors as much as possible and making sure not to overcrowd the donation site.

**It is critical to maintain a safe and adequate blood supply.**

- In order to maintain an adequate blood supply for patients in need, we encourage healthy, eligible individuals to donate blood.
- It is imperative that healthy donors continue to donate to maintain an adequate blood supply.
- In times of disaster or public health crises, it is the blood on the shelf that saves lives.
- There are patient needs 24/7 so the shelves must be replenished constantly.

**Sign up to give blood today.**

- Healthy Individuals are encouraged to make an appointment to donate.
- If the outbreak of coronavirus continues to spread, additional challenges may arise, which could potentially reduce the number of eligible donors.
- All blood drive sponsors should continue to host blood drives.