

# How to Prepare for a Great Donation Experience



**American  
Red Cross**



The American Red Cross wants your donation to be as safe and successful as possible. The following suggestions may help you prepare for your blood donation.

## Between donations

**Give your body plenty of iron.** When you donate whole blood or double red cells, your body loses some iron contained in red blood cells. Eat plenty of iron-rich food to replace these cells between donations. Foods rich in iron include:

- red meat
- fish
- poultry
- beans
- iron-fortified cereal
- broccoli
- spinach
- raisins
- prunes

Also, foods rich in Vitamin C (such as citrus fruit) help your body absorb the iron you eat. But avoid drinking tea, coffee and other caffeinated beverages with meals since caffeine can reduce iron absorption.

## Before donation

**Sleep well.** Get a full night's sleep the night before you plan to donate.

**Eat a good breakfast or lunch.** This also will help your body be well prepared for giving blood.

## Day of donation

**Drink extra water** and fluids before you donate to replace the volume of blood you will donate. You should continue drinking extra fluids after donation, too.

**Eat the right foods.** Having foods containing protein or complex carbohydrates, such as bread, cereal, fruit or lean meat may make you feel more comfortable during and after donating.

**Avoid** fatty foods, such as hamburgers or french fries, before donating. The tests that are part of our vigorous safety screening can be affected by fatty materials that appear in your blood for several hours. When this occurs, testing cannot be performed, and we may not be able to use your blood.

**Relax!** Spend 10 to 15 minutes relaxing in the refreshment area. Have a drink and snack to rejuvenate yourself.



## To be eligible to donate blood you must:

- be at least 17 years old (16 with parental permission in some states)
- meet height and weight requirements (at least 110 pounds based on height)
- be in generally good health

## Before donating you should:

- get a good night's sleep
- drink plenty of fluids
- eat within 2-3 hours

## Be sure to bring your:

- donor card or a government issued photo I.D.
- parental consent form if you are a 16-year-old donor
- wear clothing with sleeves that can be raised above the elbow