

Who Needs Blood?



A 3-year-old has cancer. Leukemia strikes a high schooler preparing for college. A young mother has unexpected complications after giving birth. A grandfather needs open heart surgery. Every day, patients across the U.S. need an average of 44,000 units of blood. That's about 17 million donations—or nearly 23 million blood products—transfused to 5 million patients a year.

Blood is a liquid that circulates throughout your body. The three components of blood used most commonly in treatment are red cells, platelets and plasma.

Red cells: Red cells carry oxygen to all parts of the body, and are used for patients who require surgery, have anemia, or lose blood in accidents or trauma. Premature or newborn infants in intensive care may also need transfusions.

Platelets: Platelets are tiny particles in blood that aid clotting. Platelets can control bleeding in patients with leukemia or undergoing chemotherapy.

Plasma: Plasma is the liquid yellow portion of your blood that carries nutrients, removes waste and fights infection. Plasma is used to treat victims of burns, accident or shock. Plasma derivatives are used to treat individuals who are missing a factor in their blood that prevents excessive bleeding, who cannot fight infections, or who have experienced a significant loss of fluid as a result of burn or injury.



The need for blood is constant. By partnering with the American Red Cross, you can help ensure that hospitals have enough blood to meet patient need. Blood usage varies widely depending on the type of surgery or illness, particular treatments, and whether there are any complications. A unit is approximately one pint of blood.

Medical Need	Red Blood Cells	Platelets	Plasma
Accident Victim	4-100 units		
Liver Transplant	10 units	10 units	20 units
Cancer/Leukemia Treatment	2-6 units	6-8 units daily for 2-4 weeks	
Heart Transplant	4-6 units		
Sickle Cell Anemia	10-15 units periodically for severe complications		
Open Heart Surgery	2-6 units	1-10 units	2-4 units
Bone Marrow Transplant	1-2 units given every other day for 4 weeks	6-8 units daily for 4-6 weeks	
Severe Burns			8 units