

Giving the Gift of Life at Any Age

Blood cannot be manufactured. It must be donated. In the US, only 5% of eligible individuals donate blood, while the number of transfusions nationwide increases by 9% each year. Blood drives in assisted living (AL) facilities provide an opportunity for residents to make an invaluable contribution to the community that has meaning everyone can relate to. Each whole blood donation can help as many as 3 people. On average, a hip replacement typically uses 1 unit of blood; a cardiac bypass, 2 units; a heart transplant, 2 units; and a liver transplant, 10 units.

AL residents are often surprised that they can donate blood and that donation is so easy and painless. While there are considerable restrictions on who can and cannot donate blood, advancing age and most medication use is not restrictive.

The process for whole blood donation usually takes about 1 hour. The blood collection is usually about 10 minutes. Apheresis (platelet) collections may take about 2 hours. The donation process includes registration, a brief medical screening, blood collection, and refreshments. Many facilities organize annual blood drives that result in positive responses from residents. Residents take pride in knowing that they can help others and are pleased that their efforts provide a positive public relations platform for their facility.

Blood Donation Requirements

The criteria listed below are provided



as guidelines to assist in determining eligibility to donate blood. There may have been changes to these criteria since the last revision date (3/21/05). Always check with the American Red Cross blood center nearest you for the most up to date guidelines.

To give blood for transfusion to another person, the donor must be healthy, weigh at least 110 pounds, and not have donated blood in the last 8 weeks (56 days). *Healthy* means that the donor feels well and can perform normal activities. *Healthy* for those with a chronic condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure means proper treatment resulting in the condition being under control.

Each potential donor's personal

health history is discussed as part of the donation process before any blood is collected. Donors receive a brief examination during which temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and blood count (hemoglobin or hematocrit) are measured. Making donations for one's own later receipt during surgery (autologous blood donation) is considered a medical procedure and the rules for eligibility are less strict than for regular volunteer donations. An individual with an infection should not donate. More detailed guidelines are available at: www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0_557_,00.html.

To schedule blood donation at your facility, visit www.givelife.org or call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543).

ALC