

Red Cross: Emergency blood shortage may delay medical procedures

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The American Red Cross is experiencing an emergency blood shortage as the nation faces the lowest number of people giving blood in 20 years. The Red Cross blood supply has fallen to critically low levels across the country, and blood and platelet donors are urged to make a donation appointment to help alleviate the shortage and help ensure lifesaving medical procedures are not put on hold.

Over the last 20 years, the number of people donating blood to the Red Cross has fallen by about 40%.

When fewer people donate blood, even small disruptions to blood donations – such as the nearly 7,000-unit shortfall in blood donations the Red Cross experienced between Christmas and New Year’s Day alone – can have a huge impact on the availability of blood products and dramatic consequences for those in need of emergency blood transfusion.

Blood products are currently going to hospitals faster than blood donations are coming in, and in recent weeks, the Red Cross has had to limit distributions of type O blood products – among the most transfused blood types – to hospitals.

“Small changes in blood donor turnout can have a huge impact on the availability of blood products and dramatic consequences for those in need of an emergency blood transfusion,” said Dr. Eric Gehrie, executive

physician director for the Red Cross. “More challenges may lie ahead as the potential for severe winter weather and seasonal illness may compound the dire blood supply situation.

“Donors of all types – especially those with type O blood and those giving platelets – are urged to give now.”

Don’t wait – to make an appointment, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

The Red Cross and the National Football League (NFL) are partnering this January, during National Blood Donor Month, to urge individuals to give blood or platelets and help tackle the emergency blood shortage.

Those who come to give blood, platelets or plasma in January will automatically be entered for a chance to win a trip for two to Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas. For details, visit [RedCrossBlood.org/Super Bowl](https://www.redcrossblood.org/SuperBowl).

Who donations help

Sandy Thornton, of Dallas, Oregon, knows firsthand how important a readily available blood and platelet supply is. Sandy battled a rare form of cancer called Myelodysplastic Syndrome and Myelo Fibrosis. She received numerous blood and platelet transfusions until eventually needing a stem cell transplant.

“There are people who cannot get a stem cell transplant, which means they face a lifetime of platelet or blood transfusions. That’s their life. Blood is a lifesaver no matter how you look at it. It’s not just about when disasters happen, it’s when people get sick,” shares Sandy.