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Coronavirus Is Rare—Giving Blood Is Vital

Healthy Blood Donors Urgently Needed for Hospital Patients

SAN BERNARDINO, CA – Amidst novel coronavirus (COVID-19) prevention measures, LifeStream Blood Bank and other blood centers nationwide are urging healthy individuals to donate blood—and organizations to maintain scheduled blood drives—to ensure patients have the lifesaving blood they need.

Healthy residents are encouraged to make an appointment to give the “gift of life” by calling 800-879-4484 or visiting LStream.org

Public health officials are enacting a number of measures to limit COVID-19, and LifeStream supports these initiatives. Blood centers have always required individuals to be in good health to donate blood. The blood collection process follows policies established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure the health and safety of donors and patients.

“It is absolutely crucial that blood donors continue to donate to help us make sure enough blood is available for patients who need it,” said Joe Chaffin, MD, LifeStream’s chief medical officer. “If COVID-19 infections increase, health care resources will be strained, and we must prepare for that possibility by ensuring a safe and adequate blood supply now.”

Currently, all blood types and components are needed, with a significant need for platelets and type O blood donations. Platelets have a very short shelf life—only 5 days. Type O negative blood is the universal blood type, frequently used in traumas that can help stabilize all patients.

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BLOOD DONATION SAFE IN WAKE OF COVID-19

LifeStream requests individuals not donate blood if they have visited Mainland China, South Korea, Iran and Italy within 28 days, or have had a COVID-19 infection, or been exposed to someone suspected of having a COVID-19 infection.

“According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the risk of contracting COVID-19 is currently low,” Dr. Chaffin said. “Furthermore, due to the nature of the virus, it is highly unlikely that it can be transmitted through blood transfusions.”

The blood collection process is safe. In addition to the vigorous FDA-mandated testing of all blood components donated, LifeStream staff follows rigorous safety protocols at its blood drives and donor centers. Also, giving blood has no impact on the donor's immune system.

“Hospitalized patients rely heavily on blood donors, since they are the only source for blood,” Dr. Chaffin said. “Our staff stands ready to safely collect blood from donors who are healthy and well.”

COVID-19 transmission occurs like the spread of the flu (influenza). And although there is currently no vaccine for COVID-19, to reduce the risk of infection, the CDC recommends washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and avoiding touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

LifeStream is closely monitoring the situation and will quickly implement any necessary changes as new information emerges from the CDC, FDA and AABB.

LifeStream is a local, nonprofit, comprehensive blood bank that supplies blood products and services to more than 80 Southern California hospitals. For more information call 800-879-4484 or visit LStream.org.

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