

BLOOD EMERGENCY

Blood Supply Tips Into Danger Zone

Recession, Winter Weather Compound January's Blood Drain

January 13, 2009 -- New York Blood Center (NYBC) and its regional operations (serving New York City, Long Island, Hudson Valley and New Jersey) have issued an emergency appeal for blood donations.

Hospital demand for blood (needed for emergency care and surgery) has increased beyond seasonal expectations while levels of blood donation have been below forecast. Blood supplies have dropped below the five-day safety level, and for some types of blood are at a less than two-day level. Some rationing of supply has been imposed upon the 200 hospitals served by NYBC and its regional operations.

“Blood is traditionally in short supply during the winter months due to the holidays, travel schedules, inclement weather and illness,” said Dr. Robert L. Jones, New York Blood Center President & CEO. January, in particular, is a difficult month for blood centers, especially following the holidays when donation levels plummet.

The currently suffering economy has also impacted donation levels with many traditional donor groups canceling, downsizing, or postponing their blood drives to another time of year. Additionally, with 15% of regional blood collection coming from high schools and colleges, winter recess contributes substantially to the current shortfall.

“The health of our community depends on people scheduling a few minutes for blood donation, to prevent additional rationing and possible cancellation of surgery,” Dr. Jones said.

Facts About Our Blood Supply

- Ordinarily, a 5-7 day supply is required to ensure that blood is available for scheduled surgical procedures, medical treatments for cancer patients and to meet emergency or unexpected disaster needs.
- To meet local needs, New York Blood Center and its regional operations in Manhattan, Brooklyn / Staten Island, Long Island, Hudson Valley and New Jersey require 2,000 blood donations each day to supply the needs of 200 hospitals.
- Approximately every two seconds, someone needs blood, and one out of three people will need a life-saving blood transfusion in their lifetime. If all eligible blood donors gave at least twice a year, it would greatly help in maintaining an adequate blood supply.

- Fewer than five percent of healthy Americans eligible to donate blood actually donate each year. In New York, only two percent actually donate.
- People can donate blood every 56 days. Red blood cells must be used within 42 days, platelets within five days, and plasma can be frozen and used for up to one year.
- A single blood donation can help save the lives of up to three people. Car accident and trauma victims need as many as 50 or more red cell transfusions, and burn victims can use up to 50 platelet transfusions
- Any company, community organization, place of worship, or individual may host a blood drive.
- Blood donors receive free mini-medical exams on site including information about their temperature, pulse rate, blood pressure and hemoglobin level.
- Eligible donors include those people at least age 16 with parental consent (in NY) or 17 (in NJ), who weigh a minimum of 110 pounds, are in good health and meet all Food & Drug Administration and NY or NJ State Department of Health donor criteria. People over 75 may donate with a doctor's note.

Visit: www.nybloodcenter.org

About New York Blood Center:

New York Blood Center (NYBC) is one of the nation's largest non-profit, community-based blood centers. NYBC has been providing blood, transfusion products and services to patients in greater New York since 1964. NYBC is also home to the Lindsley F. Kimball Research Institute and the National Cord Blood Program at the Howard P. Milstein National Cord Blood Center, the world's largest public cord blood bank. NYBC provides medical services and programs (Clinical, Transfusion, and Hemophilia Services) through our medical professionals and transfusion medicine physicians.

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JUST THE FACTS: EMERGENCY APPEAL JANUARY, 2009

We Need You

- We're making an emergency appeal for donors:
 - High demand from hospitals (surgery, emergencies, care of cancer patients).
 - Winter weather means cancellation of many blood drives.
 - Recession-related layoffs and business closings mean additional cancelled blood drives.
 - January is always one of our toughest months, since it takes awhile for people to get back into regular work routines, get back to school from holiday breaks, and begin participating in blood drives.

- Patient care is at risk
 - Blood supply is below the 5-day safety level (and for some types, less than a 2-day supply), and falling.
 - Our projections are also way down, and that's why we're asking the public for help.
 - We especially need Type O and Rh negative blood, but encourage all donors to contact us

- Some blood types are being rationed to hospitals with possibility of more drastic measures should the shortage worsen
 - Severe rationing is possible.
 - Nightmare scenario is ERs shutting down because they don't have enough blood to handle emergencies

- Four million Americans would die each year without donated blood, and the only place to get this precious resource is from volunteer blood donors

- New York Blood Center requires 2,000 each and every day.

- One out of three people will need a life-saving blood transfusion in their lifetime

- Each donation can save up to three lives

- Medical advances have increased the need for blood

- One patient can use large amounts of blood
 - Car accident, burn and other and trauma victims need 50 or more transfusions

- Many ways to reach us:
800 number, website, 3-1-1 in NYC, 212-NEW-YORK throughout NY State

Who can help

- Donors must be 17- to 75-years-old (16 in New York with parent consent, and over 75 with doctor's note)
- Donors must weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good health
- 60% of the population is eligible, and on average 5% give nationwide
- In New York, 2% actually donate
- Approximately 70% of donors give only once per year
- If 5% of the people eligible gave, or everyone who gave once gave twice, there would be no blood shortage
- People can donate red blood cells every 8 weeks (56 days) and platelets every 3 days

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