



**American  
Red Cross**

## Why Is Blood Donor Diversity Important?

### The most compatible blood match for patients receiving blood transfusions often comes from donors of the same race or similar ethnicity.

The more frequently someone receives blood transfusions, the more important a close blood type match becomes. A patient's immune system will form antibodies against donated blood that does not closely match their own blood type. To help avoid transfusion-related complications, a patient is more likely to find the most compatible blood match from a donor of the same race or similar ethnicity.

### Now more than ever, the American Red Cross needs the help of blood donors who are Black.

In the United States, it is estimated that over 100,000 people have sickle cell disease, and the disease affects 1 out of every 365 Black or African American births. **A single patient with sickle cell disease can require multiple blood transfusions each year to treat complications from sickle cell disease. Some may need as many as 100 units per year.**

Blood donors who are Black play a critical role in helping people with sickle cell disease, which primarily affects individuals who are Black or African American. Patients with this disease may rely on regular blood transfusions throughout their lives. It is essential that the blood they receive be the most compatible match possible, from someone of the same race or similar ethnicity.

While 13% of the U.S. population is Black, less than 3% of Red Cross blood donors self-identify as African American. **Right now, there aren't enough blood donors to meet the urgent need for blood for patients with sickle cell disease.**

#### Act Today!



**Schedule an appointment** to give by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://RedCrossBlood.org), using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767), or by enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.



**Bring a friend!** Many people say they've never donated blood because they've never been asked. Take the first step and invite a friend or family member to join you in giving the gift of life.



**Set up a virtual blood drive** on [RedCrossBlood.org](https://RedCrossBlood.org)/[SleevesUp](https://SleevesUp.com) and encourage others to donate.



### Just the Facts



Blood types are inherited, much like eye color. You may be familiar with the A, B, O and AB blood types. That's only the beginning. There are over 600 known antigens, proteins on your red blood cells, that determine blood type.



Some antigens are more commonly found in donations from blood donors who are Black, including C-, E- and K- antigens. C-, E-, K- blood is the most requested blood type for a patient with sickle cell disease.



You don't need to know your blood type to give blood. The Red Cross tests and types all blood donations to ensure the most compatible match for patients.

**1-800-RED CROSS**  
[RedCrossBlood.org/OurBlood](https://RedCrossBlood.org/OurBlood)  
[#BlackBloodDonorsNeeded](https://Twitter.com/BlackBloodDonorsNeeded)