

IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD DONATION

Blood donation is harmless and safe in the body. Rather, it is a social responsibility. The donor is donating for it as it will be used in saving lives of his fellow beings. He himself may use the same during his own need.

MILLIONS OF people owe their lives to people whom they will never know or meet in their lifetime. They are none other than those people, who have donated their blood freely and without any reward – voluntary blood donors. Voluntary unpaid donors are the foundation of a safe blood supply which saves millions of human beings from the jaws of untimely death. We need to extend a hearty appreciation to these unsung heroes who give the precious gift of life to mankind. JUNE 14TH IS OBSERVED AS INTERNATIONAL BLOOD DONORS DAY.

Nothing is comparable to the preciousness of human blood. In spite of the rapid and remarkable conquests of medical science today, there is no laboratory that manufactures blood. It is only in human beings that human blood is made and circulated. For those who require blood for saving their lives, sharing from other fellows is the only means. Hence, donation rather voluntary donation is the only way of accumulating blood at safe storage to meet emergency requirements for saving lives.

Blood is required for treatment of accidental injuries, burns, diseases like Haemorrhagic, Anaemia, Leukaemias, Thalassemias and Haemolytic ailments. In times of accidental injuries that shed huge amounts of blood and also in various types of surgical operations for medical treatments, we require blood for transfusion. Unavailability of blood may cost lives. Hence, importance of blood donation is tremendous. This is the greatest gift one can give to the fellow humans. Voluntary blood donors are saviors of mankind. If someone really loves oneself and other fellow beings, the only way to express it is to donate blood voluntarily.

Safe blood transfusion comes under legal protection as it is life-saving and also fatal. Article 21 under part III of Indian Constitution spells out that no person shall be deprived of his life. The Consumer Protection Act of 1986 also covers blood as a commodity. Indian Penal Code chapter XIV, sections 269 and 270 also provide for protection against spread of infectious diseases due to negligent and malignant acts. Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 also establishes regulations for blood banking and transfusions.

The role of blood in a living creature is unique. The different components of blood have different activities to perform. Red Blood Cells (RBC) transport oxygen throughout the body, White Blood Cells (WBC) constitute body's defense mechanism, Platelets helps in stopping bleeding and plasma transports proteins including anti-bodies. Blood also evacuates wastes products from all organs of the body. There are four main blood groups ie, O, A, B and AB. Group O is the most common and therefore, the most in demand.

Fear of needles, fear of pain, fear of sight of blood, fear of future weakness, fear of possible ill effects, objection from elders, ignorance and illiteracy etc are all reasons for many people who are hesitant in

donating blood. All these myths and misconceptions are to be removed in order that adequate amount of blood is made available at blood banks for saving the patients. Blood collected from voluntary donors are stored at blood banks and it will be readily made available to needed patients on replacement basis. All units of blood collected are tested for malaria, hepatitis B & C, VDRL and HIV. Voluntarily donated blood are screened for potentially life-threatening infections such as HIV and hepatitis viruses. Hence, blood recipients have nothing to worry and regular donors can maintain their safe status. Formerly, selling and buying of this life-fluid was common. Blood sellers do this trade for want of money as they are usually poor. They suffer from various ailments and they may be drug addicts, alcoholics and even carriers of blood transmissible diseases. The Supreme Court of India has banned this trade since January 1, 1998. Blood transfusion from matched relatives and friends was also in vogue. As it was not done voluntarily, there is apprehension of ill effects to the recipients. So, voluntarily donated blood from healthy and social minded individuals is considered as the safest blood for transfusion.

A blood donor has to meet the following criteria: (as per Drugs and Cosmetics Act. 1940)

- Age: between 18 to 60 years.
- Body weight: 45 kg and above.
- Pulse rate: 60 to 100 per minute and regular
- Blood pressure: Systolic 100 to 140, Diastolic 70 to 100.
- Hemoglobin: minimum 12.5gm/100ml of blood.
- Oral temperature: not exceeding 37.50C.

There are also persons who should not donate blood. They are those:

- who are feeling unwell;
- who are anaemic;
- who are either pregnant or breast-feeding;
- who have heart disease, high or low blood pressure, epilepsy, diabetes;
- who are taking anti-biotics;
- who are immunised with live vaccines;
- who are being treated for malaria during last three months;
- who received blood during the preceding three months;
- who had major operations during last six months.

The average amount of blood present in an adult is four to five liters or about eight per cent of the body weight. Life cycles of the different components are short. The RBC lives about 120 days while white cells last about three to nine days. New blood cells are constantly generated in the body. A person can donate blood 168 times during his 18 to 60 years. The quantity of blood present in one kg of body weight is 76ml for males and 66 ml for females. Out of this eight ml per kg body weight is donatable. Males can donate for every three months while females for every four months. All donated blood is recuperated within 21 days. At one time only 350 ml will be taken from a donor in not more than 20 minutes time including time for rest and refreshment.

“The gift of blood is the gift of life. There is no substitute for human blood. Blood cannot be manufactured – it can only come from generous donors.”