

Armed Services Blood Program

ARMED FORCES BLOOD PROGRAM FACTS

The Military Blood Program was established in 1952 by Presidential Order as part of the National Blood Program. Today's Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) operates at 151 worldwide locations. These include 81 blood banks and blood donor centers, of which 36 are licensed by the Food and Drug Administration. All BDC facilities that can be licensed are licensed. The program is staffed by over 800 military and civilian personnel from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The program was developed to provide blood products and services to our military community worldwide in peacetime and war.

BLOOD IS A CRITICAL READINESS ITEM

Since the Korean War the military blood program has provided over 1.5 million units of blood to treat sick and injured service members on the battlefield. Today the program maintains 65,000 units of frozen blood and 5000 units of liquid cells at all times in order to meet readiness requirements.

BLOOD IS PERISHABLE

- Platelets last only 5 days.
- Red blood cells last 35-42 days.
- Fresh frozen plasma lasts one year.

BLOOD SUPPLIES MUST BE REPLENISHED CONSTANTLY

Blood must be collected constantly to replace aging contingency supplies and also to meet the peacetime needs of the military health system. Modern health care demands tremendous amounts of blood and blood products. Every year your military hospitals transfuse more than 62,000 units of red cells, more than 20,000 units of plasma and more than 30,000 units of platelets and apheresis platelets. A single trauma case can require 40 or more units of blood. A leukemia patient uses 30 or more blood products.

BLOOD IS NOT FREE

While blood is given freely by military donors, the processing, storage and transportation of blood carries significant costs. When the ASBP cannot collect enough blood, the military must purchase products from civilian agencies, such as the Red Cross (assuming that blood is available for purchase). The average cost of blood from outside sources is about \$250 per unit.

WHO NEEDS BLOOD?

- One leukemia patient uses 30 or more blood products
- One unit of red blood cells can sustain a premature infant for two weeks
- It takes about 75 blood products a day to sustain the local military hospitals

DONATING BLOOD

- Individuals can donate blood every 56 days (eight weeks)
- Entire process takes approximately one hour
- Each unit donated will be tested for infectious disease and then separated into red blood cells, platelets, and plasma
- One donation can help up to three people!

NEW POLICY HAS SERIOUSLY REDUCED THE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL MILITARY DONORS

In October 2001, policies went into effect that dramatically decreased the possibility of transmitting the human form of Mad Cow Disease through blood products. As a result of this policy, personnel who have lived or traveled extensively in Europe and the Near East are no longer eligible to donate blood.

WHAT IS MAD COW DISEASE?

Commonly known as Mad Cow Disease, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of cattle. It is thought to have spread via meat and bone meal fed to cattle. Vast majority of reported cases have been in the United Kingdom (UK). There have been no reported cases of Mad Cow Disease in the US.

MAD COW DISEASE AND HUMANS

People who ate beef from the infected cows may have contracted the human form of Mad Cow Disease: variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD). vCJD is a fatal disease that has killed 101 people in the UK as of 1 OCT 2001. There is a theoretical possibility that vCJD can be passed through blood transfusions. There are no known cases of this nature in the US. However, ASBP has adopted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) deferral recommendations to ensure the safety of the military blood supply. As a result, the number of ineligible military donors has increased.

THE ARMED SERVICES BLOOD PROGRAM IS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN



Photo Credit: Scott Corey

Fewer than 6% of the DoD population provide the blood needed by the entire population. Many of those who have willingly contributed in the past are no longer eligible. Command emphasis and support, at every level, is needed to allow the Armed Services Blood Program to support our service members and their families in peace and in war.

SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED FORCES BLOOD PROGRAM IS A LEADERSHIP ISSUE

Each of the services requires Commanders to support the blood program and has stated policies to guide their participation. Those policies are:

- DoD Instruction 6480.4
- Air Force Instruction 44-105
- Army Regulation 40-3 Chapter 5
- Naval Operations Instruction 6530.2c

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

To find out more about how you can support the Armed Forces Blood Program contact the Donor Recruiter at your local Blood Donor Center. Additional information is also available at the ASBP website at:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/asbpo/>

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