

# African-American Blood Facts to Know and Share



- There are far more African-Americans needing blood than there are African-Americans donating blood.
- While African-Americans comprise nearly 13 percent of the United States population, they represent less than 1 percent of blood donors.
- You cannot catch infectious diseases, such as AIDS or hepatitis, from donating blood. The needle is sterile and the supplies are used only once and then discarded.
- Neither high blood pressure nor sugar diabetes prevents you from donating blood if they are under control. The Red Cross will check your blood pressure before you donate to make sure it is at a safe level for you to donate.
- Some African-Americans have rare blood types that are unique for the African-American community. Your blood type may be someone's only hope for survival.
- More African-American donors are needed to ensure that enough blood is available when needed, especially for patients with sickle cell disease.
- Sickle cell disease affects 70,000 African-Americans.
- African-Americans with diseases like sickle cell anemia, cancer and leukemia or kidney disease are less likely to have physical reactions to blood donations from other African-Americans.
- Learn more about sickle cell disease and how you can get tested at [sicklecelldisease.org](http://sicklecelldisease.org).



The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give blood.™

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**American Red Cross**

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“ I learned about the lack of blood type matches available for African-American people. ”

African-Americans have rare blood types yet suffer the same medical emergencies that any other race suffers. As an African-American, I feel I have a responsibility to contribute to the future of our unique community.



**Morgan**  
American Red Cross  
Blood Donor



**American Red Cross**

For more information about donating blood, call or visit  
[redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) | 1-800-RED CROSS  
(1-800-733-2767)

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# Why is your race important as a blood donor?



When you mark the race category on your blood donor record, your blood can be tested to see if it is a “match” for someone with either a rare blood type or sickle cell disease.

[redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) | 1-800-RED CROSS



**American Red Cross**



## You might be a special match for a patient in need!

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A “MATCH” FOR SOMEONE WITH A RARE BLOOD TYPE?

People come in all different shapes, sizes and blood types. The vast majority of blood types fall into one of the following blood type categories: A, B, AB, and O. However, for a small percentage of the population, finding someone else with the same blood type can be as difficult as looking for a needle in a haystack.

Red blood cells (the portion of blood responsible for carrying oxygen throughout the body) carry markers called antigens on their surface that determine your blood type. There are over 600 known antigens besides A and B that characterizes the proteins found on a person’s red cells.

Your blood type is inherited just like the color of your eyes and hair. As an inherited trait, African-Americans and other minority groups have rare blood types that are specific to their race, ethnicity or genetic background.

### Some rare blood types by ethnic group

African-American	U-, Fy(a-b-)
Native American, Alaskan Native	RzRz
Pacific Island, Asian	Jk (a-b-)
Hispanic	Di(b-)
East European/Russian Jews	Dr(a-)
Caucasian	Kp(b-), Vel-

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A “MATCH” FOR SOMEONE WITH SICKLE CELL DISEASE?

Blood donors play an important role in sickle cell disease treatment. Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects more than 80,000 people in the United States; ninety percent of whom are of African descent. Intermittent or lifelong “chronic” blood transfusions are often required to treat and/or prevent specific sickle cell-related complications, especially strokes.

A single patient with sickle cell can receive up to 100 pints of blood each year to continue to live with the disease.

Ideally the blood should come from individuals that are of similar ethnic or genetic background to the patient. This “phenotypically similar” blood matches the patient’s own blood more closely than blood from the general donor pool. Use of this product will decrease the risk of complications related to transfusion therapy, especially in patients who receive lifelong transfusions.

For this reason, it is extremely important to increase the number of available blood donors from all ethnic groups.

When you donate blood TODAY and mark your race on the blood donor record, you are taking that extra step toward specifically helping individuals with sickle cell disease or rare blood types. THANK YOU!

**Make your donation count and  your race!**

A-African

C-Caucasian

H-Hispanic

I-Native American

S-Asian

M-Mixed

O-Other