

Breaking down different types of blood donations

February 1 2023, by DeeDee Stiepan



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Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood, according to the American Red Cross. Becoming a donor is easy and can make a significant impact on your community.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Justin Juskewitch, associate medical director of the Blood Donor Center at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, breaks down the different types of [blood](#) donations and how they help patients in need.

Blood contains several components—red cells, [platelets](#) and [plasma](#)—that can offer different benefits to patients in need.

The most common type of donation is a whole blood donation.

"We insert a needle in your arm, and you fill up a bag that potentially could go up to three different recipients, depending on how we manufacture that blood product," says Dr. Juskewitch.

For the red blood cell part of a whole blood donation, Type O is considered the universal donor because those [red blood cells](#) can go to anyone, regardless of [blood type](#).

"On the flip side, though, if you're donating plasma, the yellow liquid component, it's actually the ABs who are the universal plasma donors," he says.

During plasma and platelet donations, donors are hooked up to a machine which separates blood components and returns unused components to the donor.

"Our plasma line, we collect three units at a time. So, potentially, that could go to three different patients," says Dr. Juskewitch.

Plasma is commonly given to people in emergency and trauma situations to help stop bleeding.

In a platelet donation, the only cells collected are the those that help with

clotting. Platelets are commonly given to people with cancer or someone having major surgery.

"We can collect up to two units at a time per donation, so that could go to two people."

Dr. Juskewitch says donating blood products doesn't just benefit patients in need, it also benefits those who give.

"This is the opportunity in which they can literally save someone's life. This is the one part of medicine in which nearly everyone in the community can be part of someone's [medical care](#)."

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Citation: Breaking down different types of blood donations (2023, February 1) retrieved 21 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-blood-donations.html>

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