

# Talking Points/FAQ

## COVID-19 Severe Blood Shortage



**American  
Red Cross**

For Use Beginning March 17, 2020

### Talking Points

**The American Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during this coronavirus outbreak. Healthy individuals are needed to donate now to help patients counting on lifesaving blood.**

- As the coronavirus pandemic has grown here in the U.S., we have seen blood drive cancellations grow at an alarming rate. Through March 16, nearly 2,700 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country due to coronavirus concerns, resulting in some 86,000 fewer blood donations.
- Workplaces, college campuses and schools are canceling their blood drives as these locations temporarily close and more people are being told to work remotely and practice social distancing.
- We are expecting cancellations to continue to increase, which is causing heightened concern for blood collection organizations and hospitals across the country.

**We understand why people may be hesitant to come out for a blood drive, but want to reassure the public that we have implemented additional precautions to ensure the safety of our donors and staff in response to concern, including:**

- Checking the temperature of staff and donors *before* entering a drive to make sure they are healthy
- Providing hand sanitizer for use before the drive, as well as throughout the donation process
- Spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors, and
- Increasing enhanced disinfecting of surfaces and equipment.

**We also want to emphasize that at each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees already follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection.**

- These strict safety protocols include:
  - Wearing gloves and changing gloves with each donor
  - Routinely wiping down donor-touched areas
  - Using sterile collection sets for every donation, and
  - Preparing the arm for donation with an aseptic scrub
- All of these mitigation measures will help ensure the safety of all those at a blood drive or center.
- There is no evidence and there are no reported cases of the coronavirus – or any respiratory virus - being transmitted by a blood transfusion.

**This blood shortage could impact patients who need surgery, victims of car accidents and other emergencies, or patients suffering from cancer. One of the most important things you can do to ensure we don't have another health care crisis on top of the coronavirus is to give blood.**

- The need for blood is constant, and will continue even as the outbreak grows. Volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need.
- Right now, people are following public health guidance to keep their families safe – and that includes contributing to a readily available supply of blood for hospitals.
- Blood donors and blood drive hosts play a critical role in maintaining a sufficient blood supply and are asked to keep hosting blood drives for patients who rely on lifesaving blood.

As a nation, this is a time where we must take care of one another including those most vulnerable among us. If you are healthy and feeling well, please make an appointment to donate as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

- The Red Cross only collects blood from individuals who are healthy and feeling well at the time of donation. Donating blood does not impact or weaken the immune system.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### GENERAL

#### **Q: How can I avoid getting the coronavirus?**

**A:** The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the virus is mainly spread from person-to-person. To help protect yourself, wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand-sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. In addition, the CDC recommends avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and putting distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.

#### **Q: What are the symptoms of this coronavirus infection?**

**A:** According to the CDC, patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Call your healthcare professional if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing.

#### **Q: Should people use a facemask to prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

**A:** The CDC recommends wearing a facemask if you are sick. If you are not sick, the CDC does not recommend wearing a facemask. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings.

#### **Q: What preparedness steps can people take to be ready for COVID-19?**

**A:** There are things individuals can do right now to be ready for any emergency, and many of these same tips will help you prepare this coronavirus in the U.S, including:

- Have a supply of food staples and household supplies like laundry detergent and bathroom items, and diapers if you have small children.
- Check to make sure you have at least a 30-day supply of your prescription medications, and have other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Learn about your community's plans. For example, how will your local public health department, place of work and children's schools share important information.
- People with elderly parents or relatives should have a plan in place for caring for them.

### RESPONSE EFFORTS

#### **Q: Is the American Red Cross accepting financial donations for the COVID-19 outbreak?**

**A:** Yes, the American Red Cross needs financial donations to help the organization continue to deliver its lifesaving mission nationwide due to this public health emergency. Donations will be used to ensure that the Red Cross can maintain a sufficient supply of blood to help patients in need and prevent any

shortages. Donations will also be used to make sure the Red Cross is able to provide critical relief services to people affected by disasters big and small.

To donate to help the American Red Cross continue to deliver its lifesaving mission nationwide due to this public health emergency, visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org), call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or text the word CORONAVIRUS to 90999. You can also donate by check by writing “Coronavirus Outbreak” in the memo line, and mailing it to your local Red Cross chapter or to the American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37839, Boone, IA 50037-0839.

**Q: How will donations to the coronavirus outbreak be used?**

**A:** Financial donations designated for the coronavirus outbreak will help the American Red Cross continue to deliver its lifesaving mission nationwide due to this public health emergency.

Donations designated to the coronavirus outbreak will be used to ensure that the Red Cross can maintain a sufficient supply of blood to help patients in need and prevent any shortages. This may include adding more staff and resources to ensure we have enough people to collect vital blood products for hospital patients in need across the country. Donations may also be used to invest in the creation of a national public service campaign to raise awareness and inspire the public to donate blood.

In addition, donations will ensure that due to this coronavirus outbreak, the Red Cross is able to provide critical relief services to people affected by disasters big and small. This includes equipping and training volunteers and staff during this outbreak to safely provide food, shelter, comfort and relief supplies to people affected by disasters of all types. Donations may also be used to invest in technology and training to make sure we can provide counseling, financial assistance and other relief services virtually.

**Q: Will coronavirus outbreak donations be used to support people who are ill with COVID-19?**

**A:** Financial donations for the coronavirus outbreak will help the American Red Cross continue to deliver its lifesaving mission nationwide due to this public health emergency. Donations will not be used to provide medical care or reimburse expenses related to testing or treatment for those with COVID-19. Donations will also not be used to supplement lost wages due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

**Q: Does the American Red Cross need donations of material goods to respond to COVID-19?**

**A:** We understand that people want to help, and we appreciate those offers of support. At this time, the American Red Cross is not accepting donations of material goods (masks, gowns, etc.) specific to the coronavirus pandemic from the general public.

**Q: How is the Red Cross responding to this virus around the globe?**

**A:** Overseas, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are preparing communities for the virus and protecting families from getting sick. From Asia and Europe to Latin America, Red Cross and Red Crescent teams are mitigating the spread of this virus by offering community-based health and hygiene promotion, providing access to basic services, and fighting stigma. For its part, the American Red Cross has contributed \$720,000 to these global Red Cross and Red Crescent efforts, in addition to providing communications support and data expertise.

**Q: What is the Red Cross doing to ensure you are still able to respond to disasters?**

**A:** Making sure that communities can turn to the Red Cross after a disaster is at the heart of what we do. We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and are continuing to carry out our lifesaving mission. The Red Cross is working closely with public health officials to ensure the safety of local communities and our workforce, while still providing the help and hope they need should disaster strike.

**Q: Will the Red Cross open emergency shelters in response to disasters in U.S. communities experiencing a coronavirus outbreak?**

**A:** Before opening a shelter in an area impacted by both a disaster and identified cases of COVID-19, the Red Cross will work closely with public health officials to set up screenings for everyone coming into the shelter and have isolation areas available for use as needed. Our goal is to provide anyone in need after a disaster with a safe place to stay where they feel comfortable and welcomed.

**Q: Will the Red Cross handout personal protective equipment to the public?**

**A:** At this time, the CDC does not recommend personal protective equipment, including facemasks, for the general public, and is instead encouraging those who are healthy to continue to take preventative health actions. This includes:

- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand-sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throwing the tissue away after use.
- If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve, not your hands.

**Q: Will you support people who can't afford two-weeks of food?**

**A:** The Red Cross encourages everyone to have a two-week supply of food, water and medications on hand in case you have to stay in your home. For those who are unable to afford a two-week supply of food, we recommend reaching out to your local food bank to get additional help to make sure your family has the supplies they need.

In the event of a disaster, the Red Cross will provide meals at emergency shelters and deliver food in some of the hardest-hit areas to ensure that no one goes hungry.

**Q. Will the Red Cross help to feed children who are out of school because of COVID-19?**

**A.** Hundreds of K-12 schools across the U.S. have been closed because of COVID-19 concerns, and many of those students depend on their school for free or reduced-price meals. To help ensure school children don't go hungry, the Red Cross will work with local community partners, as requested, to deliver meals to students if we have the resources to do so.

**Q: Will the Red Cross deliver food for people who are quarantined? Or for people in senior living facilities?**

**A:** The Red Cross encourages everyone to have a two-week supply of food, water and medications on hand in case you have to stay in your home. In the event of a long-term government-ordered quarantine, the Red Cross will continue to work closely with local officials and community partners to identify the needs of those impacted and what support the Red Cross can provide, if requested.

**BLOOD PRODUCT SAFETY**

**Q: Can you contract the coronavirus through a blood transfusion?**

**A:** There is no evidence that this coronavirus or any other respiratory viruses are transmitted by blood transfusions. Nevertheless, out of an abundance of caution, the Red Cross is using a robust health screening process for blood donors in the U.S., which consists of a temperature check, blood pressure evaluation, hemoglobin level test and a series of questions designed to ensure that a donor is healthy enough to donate. If a donor develops any symptoms of illness within the days following donation, donations are immediately quarantined and not used for transfusion. It's important to emphasize that there are no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusion, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

**Q: Is the Red Cross deferring donors who have traveled to China or other countries that have local cases of this coronavirus?**

**A:** While there have been no reported cases worldwide of any respiratory virus, including COVID-19, being transmitted through a blood transfusion, the Red Cross has implemented new blood donation deferrals out of an abundance of caution. We ask that individuals postpone their donation for 28 days following:

- Travel to China and its special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Iran, Italy and South Korea.
- Diagnosis of COVID-19, contact with a person who has or is suspected to have the virus.

As the situation evolves, the Red Cross may implement additional travel deferrals as needed.

**Q: Why is it a 28-day deferral when this coronavirus quarantine typically lasts 14 days?**

**A:** To ensure the safety of the blood supply, as well as our staff and donors, the deferral period often doubles the incubation period out of an abundance of caution. This 28-day deferral period for COVID-19 aligns with recommendations from AABB's Transfusion Transmitted Disease Committee and FDA considerations.

**Q: How does the Red Cross define "contact" in its new deferral?**

**A:** The Red Cross coronavirus specific deferral for contact is defined as an individual who has cared for, lived with, or had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person with COVID-19 or someone suspected to have COVID-19.

**Q: Is there a test to screen the 2019 strain of coronavirus from blood donations?**

**A:** There is no test to screen blood donations for the coronavirus and other respiratory viruses. It's important to emphasize that there are no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusions, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

**Q: Rumor has it that if you can't afford the test for coronavirus, the Red Cross will test your blood when you donate. Is that true?**

**A:** There is no test to screen blood donations for the coronavirus and other respiratory viruses. It's important to emphasize that there are no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusions, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

**Q: Who should donors contact if they have a question about deferrals and eligibility?**

**A:** For more information or if donors have questions about deferrals and eligibility, please contact the Donor and Client Support Center at 1-866-236-3276.

**Q: What if a donor becomes sick with this coronavirus after donating?**

**A:** The Red Cross provides a call back number should a donor develop any symptoms of illness within the days following a donation. The Red Cross has updated our post-donation instructions to ask donors to report a post-donation diagnosis of the coronavirus infection as soon as possible to the Red Cross. Donations from such donors are immediately quarantined and not used for transfusion.

**Q: If a serious shortage occurs, will the Red Cross change its eligibility to allow more people to give? Could men who have sex with men (MSM) be eligible to donate in that scenario?**

**A:** The Red Cross, like all blood collectors in the U.S., is required to follow the eligibility guidelines by the FDA. Although the Red Cross believes blood donation eligibility should not be determined by those that are based upon sexual orientation and has asked the FDA to consider reducing its deferral time for

MSM, as a regulated organization, we cannot unilaterally enact changes concerning the MSM deferral policy.

We remain committed to working to achieve an inclusive and equitable blood donation process that treats all potential donors with equality and respect, and ensures that a safe, sufficient blood supply is readily available for patients in need.

## **BIOMED CANCELLATIONS AND INVENTORY**

### **Q: Does the Red Cross have a blood shortage due to coronavirus?**

**A:** The Red Cross is now facing a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during this coronavirus outbreak. This blood shortage could impact patients who need surgery, victims of car accidents and other emergencies, or patients suffering from cancer. One of the most important things you can do to ensure we don't have another health care crisis on top of the coronavirus is to give blood. That's why we are urging healthy, eligible individuals to schedule a blood or platelet donation appointment at [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) today to help patients counting on lifesaving blood.

### **Q: How is coronavirus affecting blood donations?**

**A:** The Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during this coronavirus outbreak. Workplaces, college campuses and schools are canceling their blood drives as these locations temporarily close and more people are being told to work remotely and practice social distancing.

Right now, people are following public health guidance to keep their families safe – and that includes contributing to a readily, available blood supply for hospitals. Blood products are perishable, and the only source of lifesaving blood for patients is volunteer blood donors. This blood shortage could impact patients who need surgery, victims of car accidents and other emergencies, or patients suffering from cancer. One of the most important things you can do to ensure we don't have another health care crisis on top of the coronavirus is to give blood.

### **Q: How many blood drives have been canceled due to coronavirus?**

**A:** As the coronavirus pandemic has grown here in the U.S., we have seen blood drive cancellations grow at an alarming rate. Through March 16, nearly 2,700 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country due to coronavirus concerns, resulting in some 86,000 fewer blood donations.

The Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to this unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations. Healthy individuals are needed to donate now to help patients counting on lifesaving blood. Schedule a blood or platelet donation appointment at [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) today.

### **Q: How many blood drives have been canceled in <STATE> due to coronavirus?**

**A:** Here in <STATE>, we have had <##> blood drives canceled due to coronavirus concerns, resulting in <###> uncollected blood donations. The Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to this unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations. That's why we are asking organizations to please keep their blood drives and for donors to continue to give. Together, we must ensure a readily available blood supply for patients who are counting on us.

### **Q: Why have there been so few blood drives canceled in <STATE> compared to the rest of the country?**

**A:** There have been a few areas like <STATE> that have yet to see this drastic increase in blood drive cancellations. And that's a good thing – it puts <STATE> in a position to help the rest of the country to ensure patients receive lifesaving blood. With our national inventory, the Red Cross has the ability to provide blood wherever and whenever its needed.

**Q: What states or areas of the country are people canceling blood drives?**

**A:** We are experiencing cancellations across the country. Cancellations are not limited to specific geographies with increased risk or community spread. Right now, the Red Cross strongly urges blood drive hosts to keep hosting blood drives across the country to ensure we have a readily available blood supply for patients who are counting on us.

**Q: Has the Red Cross provided blood to other blood providers due to coronavirus shortages?**

**A:** During this challenging time, the Red Cross has provided approximately 100 blood products to a blood provider in Washington state whose collections have been hurt in a community outbreak area. As a steward of the nation's blood supply, during disasters and times of shortage, the Red Cross coordinates with other blood collection organizations, as well as the AABB Disaster Task Force, to ensure patient needs continue to be met.

**Q: Why are blood drive hosts canceling their Red Cross blood drives?**

**A:** Blood drive hosts have canceled their blood drives as these locations temporarily close and more people are being told to work remotely and practice social distancing. Red Cross blood drive hosts play a critical role in maintaining a sufficient blood supply, and we ask that hosts please continue to hold their upcoming blood drive in communities. Blood drives provide opportunities for people to give, and they are critically needed right now to keep the blood supply stable during this challenging time.

**Q. Why are blood drive hosts so important to the blood supply?**

**A.** Because more than 80 percent of blood donations are made at blood drives hosted by volunteers, blood drive partners play a vital role in helping the American Red Cross ensure blood is available for patients at about 2,500 hospitals across the country.

**Q: I heard the Red Cross has canceled a local community event. Will the Red Cross be canceling blood drives too?**

**A:** Donations of time, blood and money are essential to the Red Cross mission. As our nation copes with new cases of the coronavirus, we are taking every precaution to keep communities and our staff members healthy. As such, and out of an abundance of caution, we postponed <INSERT EVENT>. While this decision was a difficult one, we are confident that the affected donors will continue funding the Red Cross's lifesaving work now and in the future.

Another step we are taking in response to the coronavirus is to ramp up calls to protect our nation's blood supply. Red Cross blood drives are essential to maintaining a readily available supply for hospital patients. Continuing to host blood drives is critical to public health preparedness and is our responsibility during this time of uncertainty. Our teams ensure a safe and healthy environment in which to donate blood and we encourage all healthy individuals to step up and help us meet the need.

**Q: How does this virus outbreak compare to other outbreaks or emergencies?**

**A:** This is an unprecedented situation. That's why we are coming together with the larger blood industry to raise awareness and share that we urgently need the help of blood donors and blood drive hosts during this challenging time.

**Q: There aren't any confirmed cases yet in <INSERT STATE>. What impact will our local donors make?**

**A:** As a national network, the Red Cross has the ability to move blood around the country to wherever and whenever it is needed most. Donations in areas like <INSERT STATE> play a critical role in helping ensure the Red Cross maintains a sufficient supply for those in need of lifesaving blood products.

**Q: I tried to make an appointment to donate blood, but there are no blood drives near me?**

**A:** The Red Cross is adding appointment slots at donation centers and expanding capacity at many community blood drives across the country over the next few weeks to ensure ample opportunities for donors to give.

Unfortunately, as drives are canceled during this outbreak there may be fewer locations where individuals can give. Workplaces, college campuses and schools are canceling their blood drives as these locations temporarily close and more people are being told to work remotely and practice social distancing. We apologize for any inconvenience and want to stress that we are doing everything we can to have more blood drives for our donors. During this challenging time, we hope you will still be able to find a location and time to give for patients who are counting on us.

**Q. Are you aware of any postponed or canceled surgeries due to the shortage?**

**A.** Right now, we are hearing that elective surgeries are being cancelled at many hospitals. We cannot be certain whether any postponed or canceled surgeries are particularly due to our current blood shortage. While we do want to emphasize that the Red Cross is doing everything we can to prevent this from happening, we are exceedingly concerned with our current inventory levels. We are working closely with our hospital partners to ensure blood products are appropriately prioritized to ensure patient needs are met.

**Q: How does the coronavirus outbreak affect volunteer needs for Biomedical Services?**

**A:** The American Red Cross continues to need volunteers to carry out our mission critical services. Volunteers are needed to support the collection and delivery of lifesaving blood. To learn more about volunteer opportunities in your area, visit [www.redcross.org/volunteer](http://www.redcross.org/volunteer).

**Q. How bad is the shortage/the situation?**

**A.** This is really an unprecedented situation. The alarming number of blood drive cancellations and lower donor turnout we're seeing from this coronavirus outbreak is expected to have continued impacts on our blood supply in the coming weeks and may lead to delays in essential medical care.

**Q. What is the situation with the national and local Red Cross blood supply?**

**A.** The blood supply fluctuates as donations come in and go out to help hospital patients every day of the week, and local blood supplies are similarly affected by fewer donations than what's needed. The Red Cross monitors the blood supply on a daily basis and works with hospital partners to prioritize needs. As a national system and the nation's single largest blood services provider, we strive to ensure blood products are available for all patients no matter where or when they need it.

It's important to remember that blood is perishable and cannot be stockpiled in advance, but the Red Cross blood supply can be replenished when generous volunteers roll up a sleeve to give. In our experience, the American public comes together to support those in need during times of shortage and that support is needed now more than ever during this unprecedented public health crisis. We are working with our volunteer blood drive coordinators, generous donors and dedicated staff to do everything we can to overcome this severe blood shortage.

**BLOOD DONATION & BLOOD DRIVE SAFETY**

**Q: Is it safe to give blood right now?**

**A:** Donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give or receive blood. Donating blood does not impact or weaken the immune system.

The Red Cross has also implemented additional precautions to ensure the safety of our donors and staff during this outbreak. Healthy individuals are needed to donate now to help patients counting on lifesaving blood. The need for blood is constant, and volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need of transfusions.

**Q: What safety precautions are in place at Red Cross blood drives to protect staff and donors?**

**A:** The Red Cross asks potential donors who may have any risk factors to postpone and donate at a later time. The Red Cross only collects blood from individuals who are healthy and feeling well at the time of donation. Donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give.

At each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees already follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection, including:

- Wearing gloves and changing gloves with each donor
- Routinely wiping down donor-touched areas
- Using sterile collection sets for every donation, and
- Preparing the arm for donation with an aseptic scrub.

We understand why people may be hesitant to come out for a blood drive, but want to reassure the public that we have implemented additional precautions to ensure the safety of our donors and staff, including:

- Checking the temperature of staff and donors *before* entering a drive to make sure they are healthy;
- Providing hand sanitizer for use before entering the drive, as well as throughout the donation process;
- Spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors; and
- Increasing enhanced disinfecting of surfaces and equipment.

These mitigation measures will help ensure staff and donor safety in reducing contact with those who may potentially have this, or any, respiratory infection.

**Q: What *new* safety protocols has the Red Cross put in place?**

**A:** The Red Cross already follows thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection each day. In response to this coronavirus, we've implemented additional precautionary measures out of an abundance of caution, including:

- Checking the temperature of staff and donors *before* entering a drive to make sure they are healthy;
- Providing hand sanitizer for use before entering the drive, as well as throughout the donation process;
- Spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors; and
- Increasing enhanced disinfecting of surfaces and equipment.

We are also looking at staggering donor appointments further apart to reduce the number of people at a drive at any one time. These mitigation measures will help ensure staff and donor safety in reducing contact with those who may potentially have this, or any, respiratory infection.

**Q: The public is being asked to avoid mass gatherings. Aren't blood drives mass gatherings?**

**A:** Like a hospital, grocery store, or pharmacy, a blood drive is vital to ensuring the health of the community, and the Red Cross will continue to hold blood drives during this challenging time to help meet patient needs. We understand that people have concerns right now about all aspects of public health, but want to stress that donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give. Most blood drives are not considered "mass gatherings" as these are controlled events with trained staff

and appropriate safety measures to protect donors and recipients. It's important to note that at each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection.

**Q: Public officials are telling people to stay home, but you're encouraging people to go out to give blood. Why are you contradicting that guidance?**

**A:** During a crisis, we see the best of humanity when Americans step up and help their neighbors. In the midst of this coronavirus emergency, we are asking people to take this responsibility seriously by practicing social distancing and donating blood. These two activities—which are not mutually exclusive—will go a long way in keeping community members healthy by slowing the spread of the virus and by ensuring that patients across the country receive lifesaving blood.

In practice, we recommend people leave home only for necessities—be they health care, groceries, or blood donation.

We understand that people have concerns right now about all aspects of public health, but want to stress that donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give. It's important to note that blood drives have highest standards of safety and infection control—and do not fall in the category of “mass gatherings”. We are also spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors and are looking at staggering donor appointments further apart to reduce the number of people at a drive at any one time.

**Q: Is it safe for older people to come out and donate?**

**A:** In many areas of the country, public officials are asking older individuals to limit public interaction as much as possible. We encourage all donors to follow the guidance of their local health officials. Please note, however, that our Red Cross blood drives have the highest standards of safety and infection control—and do not fall in the category of “mass gatherings”. Depending on the severity of the outbreak in a particular community and an older donor's particular circumstances, some older donors may choose to postpone their donation appointment to a later date.

**Q: Is the Red Cross collecting plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients to help treat current COVID-19 patients?**

**A:** At this time, the American Red Cross is not collecting plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients in order to treat current patients. While, we are evaluating how we could become involved in a program like this, in collaboration with other industry partners, in the future, we want to emphasize that right now, we are focused on collecting blood donations for patients in need today during this coronavirus outbreak.

**Q: Should the blood program leaders or the public be worried about the health of the staff that the donor will come into contact with?**

**A:** No. We have implemented standard staff health assessments prior at all our blood donation sites to ensure staff are healthy the day of the drive.

**Q: Is the Red Cross prepared for a staffing shortage should this outbreak become widespread in the U.S.?**

**A:** We are hiring and training supplemental staff throughout the country to respond to potential staff call outs, sick leave and to operate newly added blood drives. We plan to augment our normal staffing model up to 10% in some geographies to ensure continuity within our blood drives during this challenging time.

**Q: Does the Red Cross have enough supplies during this outbreak to continue to collect blood?**

**A:** We are closely monitoring our supply inventory. Right now, in close collaboration with our partner vendors, we have secured the necessary equipment and supplies to ensure continuity of collections and manufacturing operations to minimize any disruption in service.