

CORONAVIRUS Mobile Operations FAQs

May 2020

Mobile/Community Blood Drives

Why is the blood center able to host drives when all non-essential businesses are shut down?

Blood Centers are essential and an integral part of our healthcare system. Hospitals cannot perform essential services for all kinds of patients without life-saving blood and blood products. We are proud to be the first provider of Convalescent Plasma being used to treat COVID 19 patients, but we also need to supply red cells, platelets and plasma for all those in need and blood and blood products are perishable.

We operated with Donor Centers only for as long as we were able to meet the needs of hospitals. With blood need increasing to normal, we are essential too. Like hospitals, fire, police, utilities and those that keep our food supply going, blood centers must be able to collect blood to meet the needs of patients in our community.

What kind of space do we need?

- The bigger, the better, 1500 – 3000 square feet.
- Open to the public by appointment only (or walk-ins if not at capacity)
- Use of tables and chairs
- Close proximity to bathrooms
- Available from 6 am – 9 pm
- Access to electrical outlets for Alyx technology

Why is it important to donate now?

It is important for everyone to donate today so that we can build up a strong blood supply. Blood is a critical component of emergency preparedness because it's perishable and the supply must be constantly replenished. The blood that is on the shelf now is the blood that will save lives if there is an emergency.

Is there a shortage of blood?

Blood drives were cancelled from March through May, but at the same time blood usage was down while hospitals delayed elective surgeries and focused on COVID 19 patients. In the last few weeks, blood needs have dramatically increased to pre-COVID 19 levels while our operations are still limited to primarily donor centers.

This is the reason for our commencing mobile operations again. While we are NOT back to business as usual with blood drives at businesses, schools, colleges, we are scheduling mobile operations in large venues where we can provide a convenient, safe environment for donors who are not close to any of our 19 donor centers.

How does NYBC determine if people are eligible to donate blood?

We ask if you are feeling well and healthy on the day of donation. Our health questionnaire and laboratory screening are designed to identify donors who may be at risk for transfusion transmitted infections.

What measures are being taken to make sure mobile blood drive set-ups are virus-free?

We ask blood donors and our own staff to stay home if they are not feeling well. Our staff are trained in universal precautions to help prevent the risk of spreading infectious agents.

- Blood Center employees' temperatures are taken prior to the start of each shift.
- Blood donor temperatures are taken before they can start the registration process.
- Blood Center employees are to wear masks and donors a face covering.
- Blood drive set-ups are changed to allow more social spacing between donors and staff.
- Blood donations are by appointment only and walk-ins are not currently allowed.
- We are also regularly cleaning public surfaces.
- Refreshments for blood donors are single service, individually wrapped.
- Donors may download a letter from the blood center that indicates that they were out of quarantine to give blood but this has not proven any more necessary than folks having to prove their need to visit a pharmacy or grocery store.

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Can someone donate blood if they have traveled recently?

We currently ask each donor about recent travel to regions where there is a higher risk for transfusion transmitted infections such as malaria and CJD. FDA has not established this same kind of requirement for the Corona virus since it is not known to be transmitted by blood. However, donors are encouraged to refrain from donating, or attending a blood drive, if they have traveled to areas with COVID-19 outbreaks, as defined by CDC. Individuals who are quarantined for potential coronavirus exposure should not donate blood for the protection of our staff.

What is the blood center doing in response to Coronavirus?

We are actively monitoring the situation along with our local partners and will follow the most up to date guidance from the CDC and City and State Departments of Health as the situation evolves. We take the health of our donors and staff very seriously and always follow strict guidelines to prevent the spread of infection. Visit NYBC.org for up to date information.

In addition, NYBCe is the leader in the U.S. in collecting Convalescent plasma, from recovered COVID 19 patients, who are symptom free, but have the valuable antibodies to help COVID 19 patients. These types of donations are only scheduled via our website at <https://www.nybc.org/donate-blood/covid-19-and-blood-donation-copy/convalescent-plasma-covid-19-donor-request-form/>

Can someone catch Coronavirus by donating blood?

No. Donating blood is safe. We always use new, sterile needles that are discarded after use.

Can someone donate blood while sick?

No, as always, you are not eligible to donate if you're experiencing a cold, sore throat, respiratory infection or flu-like symptoms until three days after the symptoms have passed.

Do you test blood before it goes to recipients?

All donated blood, even donations from repeat donors, is tested for blood type, hepatitis, HIV, syphilis, and other transfusion transmissible diseases.

Can someone catch Coronavirus from a blood transfusion?

There is no evidence that coronaviruses are transmissible by blood transfusion. Furthermore, pre-donation screening procedures are designed to prevent donations from people who are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illnesses.

What can someone do to protect themselves from Coronavirus?

Adhere to the state and federal best practices. Follow social distancing and wear your face covering in public and if donating blood. Standard practices for cold and flu season are the best way to keep our community healthy. This includes staying home when you're sick, frequently washing your hands, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with your elbow, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or face after touching public surfaces. Visit this link for videos and reminders on proper hand hygiene.