

# **A description of the steps involved in collecting, processing, and distributing volunteer blood donations.**

The blood center is responsible for ensuring a safe, reliable and affordable blood supply to our hospital partners and their patients.

Blood banking is closely regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and we are monitored and controlled in much the same way as the pharmaceutical industry. The blood center is subject to announced and unannounced FDA inspections of our facilities to ensure we are operating as safely as possible and in accordance with the law.

The following details the steps involved in collecting, processing and distributing blood from volunteer donors.

## **Step One: Educate and Create Awareness**

In most cases, blood that is donated today will be transfused into a patient within 48 to 72 hours. The turnaround is that fast, the need is constant. Considering only 5 – 10 percent of the population donates blood when 39% are actually eligible, the blood center actively seeks opportunities to speak to various groups and organizations to create awareness about the need for blood donation and educate people about the importance of their specific blood type. In addition to speaking engagements, we also utilize our website, video storytelling, social media, public service announcements and partner with various media outlets to get the word out about the need for blood donation in our communities.

## **Step Two: Recruitment of Volunteer Blood Donors**

After donors are educated about the process, we need to recruit them to be blood donors. In addition to recruiting donors on-site at blood drives, our telerecruitment staff personally calls donors to schedule appointments at our branch locations and mobile drives. We also issue automated phone calls to donors, send e-flyers and issue recruitment messages on our website and via social media.

## **Step Three: Collect Blood Products from Volunteer Donors**

Now it's time to roll-up your sleeve and donate blood. At this stage, a trained phlebotomist will assist the donor with the actual act of blood donation. First the phlebotomist will draw a small test tube of blood from the donor. This is what will be used to test your blood to ensure it is safe to be transfused into a patient. Once the test tube collection is complete, the phlebotomist will begin the blood donation process.

## **Step Four: Process and Test the Blood**

Once the blood is collected, each unit of blood moves on to the testing phase to ensure it is safe. The test tubes the phlebotomist drew at the beginning of the donation process must be tested for a battery of tests including HIV 1 & 2, West Nile Virus, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B, T-cruzi or Chagas, Syphilis and Human T-Cell Lymphotropic Virus 1 & 2. Each unit of blood is also tested for cholesterol levels. During testing is also when the blood type of each unit is determined. In other words, this is where your blood is labeled as A, B, AB or O and marked as either RH positive or RH negative.

While testing is going on in the lab, your unit of blood is being processed. The bag of blood you saw during donation has moved on to the biologics manufacturing lab. This is where each unit is placed in a device known as a centrifuge and spun at an extremely high speed in order to separate the blood into three components: red blood cells, platelets and plasma. Then the blood is placed into a squeezing device known as an expresser and the three blood products are placed into three separate bags and labeled.

This process of testing and separating the blood products takes place 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## **Step Five: Distribute Blood to Hospitals**

Assuming the blood passes the rigorous screening and testing phase and is considered safe for transfusion the blood is packaged into containers and delivered to hospitals. Watch a video about what happens to each unit of blood.