

# BECOME A VOLUNTEER PLATELET DONOR

## THE NEED HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER!

*Last year patients with cancer, treated at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital required over 15 thousand units of platelets to meet their transfusion needs.*

Many cancer treatments reduce the number of blood cells patients have in their bodies. A reduced supply of red blood cells can cause anemia and a feeling of weakness. **A reduction of platelets may increase the risk of internal bleeding.**

### Why should I donate platelets?

Unlike medicines, blood products can not be made in a laboratory.

People with cancer may need extra blood or some portions, like **platelets**:

- People with cancer may develop low platelets, or **thrombocytopenia**, when the body's bone marrow is damaged from some kinds of chemotherapy or from some types of leukemia or lymphoma.

**Many cancer patients depend on platelet transfusions to help them regain their strength, fight infections, and recover from cancer treatment. When platelet levels fall too low, patients may need a transfusion of platelets to replenish their supply and prevent life-threatening hemorrhages. Some patients, especially those who have had a bone marrow transplant or who are being treated for leukemia, may require daily platelet transfusions for several weeks.**

### By donating platelets, you will be helping patients fight against their cancer.

**A healthy supply of platelets is crucial for people with cancer, who need more blood products than people with any other type of illness. Because platelets can only be stored for just five days — we rely on donations from friends, family members, good citizens, and others to ensure there is enough for everyone.**

### What is different about donating platelets and how long does it take?

Donating platelets is done through a process called apheresis. This is an automated blood collection process where the donors' blood is separated during the donation by using a "cell separator" or apheresis machine. Only one of your arms is used to withdraw blood, separate out the platelets, and return the rest of the blood to you. Your other arm is free to turn pages in a book, click on a laptop keyboard, or scratch an itch during the 70 to 90 minute donation procedure. This is in addition to the time it takes you to complete your registration form and have your medical history taken and reviewed. Plan to spend about 2 hours with us when you are donating platelets.

# Is It Safe To Donate Platelets?

Yes, it is safe to donate platelets. All needles and supplies used to collect are sterile, disposable, and used only once — for you — before being discarded.

## Who Can Donate

We ask that all donors be in good health, weigh a minimum of 110 lbs, be at least 17 years old or under the age of age 75 (16 year olds must have parental consent and weigh 120 lbs. Physicians consent is required for first time donors over the age of 75.) All donors are required to show a valid Photo ID.

You **may not** donate if you:

- Have a history of viral hepatitis at the age of 11 or older
- Are recovering from an infection or illness
- Are in a high - risk group such as those with AIDS
- Recently had major surgery
- Spent a total of three months or more in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1996
- Spent 5 years or more in Europe (including time spent in the UK between 1980 and 1996) since 1980
- Served more than six months at a military base in certain European countries between 1980 and 1996

To learn more or to speak to a blood services staff person about your medical eligibility, please call 732-235-8100 ext. 221 or 248.

## Are there any special instructions I should follow before donating platelets?

**Do not take aspirin or products containing aspirin for at least 72 hours before your appointment.** Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (such as ibuprofen) are acceptable.

Eat a regular meal and drink plenty of fluids one to two hours before donating platelets. We also suggest that you increase your consumption of calcium-rich foods (such as dairy products) or take a calcium supplement the evening before your donation and also the morning of your donation.