



THE BLOOD CENTER OF NEW JERSEY

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SWEET 16 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I heard that 16-year-olds can now donate blood. Is this true?

Yes, this is true. A bill signed into law on May 6, 2009 by Gov. Jon S. Corzine lowered the legal age to donate blood to 16 with parent/guardian consent. Sponsored by Senate President Richard J. Codey, the bill was aimed at increasing the availability of potential blood donors in New Jersey.

Under previous law, anyone 17 years of age and older could donate blood without parent/guardian consent.

On average each year, New Jersey imports 60,000 to 75,000 units of blood from other states in order to meet the demand of New Jersey hospitals for the blood they require in order to administer life saving transfusions to their patients.

At this time, only 2.5 percent of eligible New Jersey residents donate blood compared to the national average of 5 percent.

Currently, 22 states including New York allow 16 year olds to donate, two of which, Oregon and Kansas, do not require parental consent. Some states have permitted 16 year olds to donate for many years. Washington, for example, has offered 16-year-olds the opportunity for more than 30 years.

When will BCNJ start accepting blood donations from 16 year olds?

Beginning October 1, 2009, The Blood Center of New Jersey (BCNJ) will be accepting donations from 16-year-olds with parent/guardian consent, weigh at least 120 pounds and be in general good health. If your teenager is 16-years-old and has expressed interest in donating blood, but was not old enough, now could be their opportunity.

By becoming a blood donor, your teenager will experience what it means to be a good citizen, have an opportunity to make a difference, demonstrate maturity and a sense of community spirit. Through their blood donation, your teenager has the potential to save up to three lives!

Why does the Blood Center require parent/guardian consent forms for 16- year-olds?

It is the law that 16-year-olds are REQUIRED to have a parental/guardian consent form signed by a parent or guardian in order to be permitted to donate at any blood drive. This includes high school blood drives, community blood drive, blood drives on bloodmobiles, or at fixed sites in Parsippany and West Orange. At high school blood drives, 16 year olds will be encouraged to have their parent/guardian consent form signed and returned to the blood drive chairperson when scheduling appointments to donate.

Where can I obtain a parent/guardian consent form?

Parent/guardian consent forms for 16-year-olds are available at blood drives, or can be downloaded from our website at www.bloodnj.org – all information is listed next to the **Guitar** on the home page. High school blood drives will receive copies of consent forms from their BCNJ Account Representative.

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Why is The Blood Center of New Jersey now accepting donations from 16-year-olds?

BCNJ has received interest from many 16-year-olds and their blood donor parents. They want to be able to participate in the blood donation process. Many students have expressed a desire to help save lives and to feel empowered through the process of blood donation.

As the demand for blood keeps growing, more blood centers continue to have difficulty maintaining the blood supply. Lowering the donation age to 16 is part of a growing national trend that is being adopted by many other states to help combat blood shortages.

Why should I give blood?

Medical technology has provided many life-saving discoveries over the years, but there is still no substitute for blood. In a medical emergency, often the most important element is the availability of blood. Blood donations can help a variety of individuals: trauma victims, surgery patients, premature babies, individuals with anemia, cancer patients and many more.

What benefits are available for individuals who donate blood?

In addition to helping save up to three lives, blood donors receive many benefits. For example, all donors receive a mini-physical exam at the time of their donation. This includes the determination of hemoglobin levels (as a sign of anemia), blood pressure, temperature, cholesterol screening and various other blood screening tests. After each donation, donors will receive a donor identification card in the mail which will indicate their blood type and cholesterol screening results. Donors are automatically enrolled in our "Members for Life" program and each time they donate they will be awarded points that can be redeemed at the BCNJ on-line store for gift cards and other items.

What form of identification (ID) is needed to donate?

For the first donation, donors must provide their Social Security number. For repeat donations, donors can use their Donor Identification number that BCNJ has assigned to them which appears on their donor card. Every time a donation is made, a picture ID or a signed ID with full name must be presented at the time of donation.

Can you explain the blood donation process?

Donating blood takes less than one hour from the time you arrive until you are ready to leave.

First you complete a registration form with basic information such as your name, address, birth date and general health information..

Then, one of our medical professionals will check your blood pressure, temperature and hemoglobin level (iron); take a look at your arm to make sure it is clear of any signs of infection; and ask confidential questions about your health and risk behavior to ensure that you are eligible to donate blood that day.

The actual whole blood donation takes between 7 to 10 minutes. Afterwards, you will be given juice and light snacks to replenish fluids lost during donation.

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Are there any special instructions I should follow before donating whole blood?

Donors should routinely eat good meals that include iron-rich foods – like red meat; green, leafy vegetables; and iron-fortified cereals. Donors should eat a meal prior to donating and drink plenty of fluids before donating blood and after.

How long will it take to replenish the unit of blood I donate?

Your body will replace the blood volume (plasma) within 48 hours. It will take four to eight weeks for your body to completely replace the red blood cells you donated. The average adult has 8 to 12 pints of blood in their body.

What happens to my blood after I donate?

Testing is done on each unit of blood donated to detect various infectious agents that can be transmitted by transfusion, including HIV and hepatitis. If there are any abnormal laboratory test results, the results will be shared with the donor. If a 16 year old has any abnormal laboratory test results, the results will be shared with the parent/guardian. Otherwise, all health history information will be strictly confidential as required by law. Donors should NOT donate blood to get test results. **Individuals interested in getting tested for various diseases such as HIV, need to contact their local health department to locate testing locations.**

The unit of donated blood will be processed into components (red blood cells, platelets, plasma). After processing, red blood cells can be stored for 42 days, platelets can be stored for five days and plasma can be frozen for one year. Your single unit of blood can help save the lives of up to three separate patients.

The blood is then distributed to area hospitals 24 hours a day seven days a week.

How often can I give whole blood?

You can donate whole blood every 56 days or eight weeks, up to 6 times per year.