

Fact Sheet



**American
Red Cross**

YOUNG DONOR SAFETY INITIATIVE – JULY 2009

New height and weight requirements have been introduced for whole blood donation.

Q. What has changed this fall for young donors?

A. As a safety measure, the American Red Cross will introduce new height and weight requirements for whole blood donation by high school-age donors in September 2009.

Q. Why were new height and weight requirements introduced for high school-age donors?

A. This precaution is being taken because young donors are more likely to experience a reaction after giving whole blood than older donors. Most reactions are minor symptoms, such as dizziness or lightheadedness, but fainting and more serious injuries can occur. Young donors are more likely to have a reaction if they have a low blood volume. A person's blood volume depends on their gender, height and weight. The new policy is an effort to ensure that people who qualify for blood donation will lose only a relatively small amount of their total blood volume.

Q. Who is affected by the new policy?

A. The new height/weight criteria will apply to the following young donors:

- All high school students, regardless of their age, who present at high school blood drives
- All donors younger than 19 years of age that present at blood drives outside of their high school setting

Q. What are the new height and weight requirements for young donors?

A. Boys who are 5 feet or taller must weigh at least 110 pounds.

Girls who are 5 feet 6 inches or taller must weigh at least 110 pounds.

More specifically,

MALE donors must weigh 110 pounds or more, depending on their height in the following chart:

If you are	4' 10"	4' 11"	5' or taller
You must weigh at least	120	115	110

FEMALE donors must weigh 110 pounds or more, depending on their height in the following chart:

If you are	4' 10"	4' 11"	5'	5' 1"	5' 2"	5' 3"	5' 4"	5' 5"	≥ 5' 6"
You must weigh at least	146	141	138	133	129	124	118	115	110

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Q. Does this mean that I will be weighed and measured when I donate blood at my high school?

A. No. We will ask you for your weight and height before you donate in a confidential interview. It is important that you answer all questions truthfully.

Q. Do the new requirements also apply to apheresis (e.g., double-red cell) donations?

A. No. Apheresis donations have their own height and weight requirements that are not changing.

Q. I donated last year at my high school – why was I turned away this year if I weigh more than 110 pounds?

A. Even if students have successfully donated in the past, they will not be allowed to donate if they do not meet the new criteria for height and weight. We recognize that this precaution may disappoint some individuals who return to try to donate, but we believe that these measures are necessary to improve safety for young donors. We encourage these individuals to donate again when they meet the new criteria or get involved with the Red Cross in other ways.

Q. If I can't donate blood now, are there other ways I can help?

A. Yes! You can help by organizing or volunteering at blood drives at your school. To learn more about how you can volunteer with the American Red Cross call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE or visit givebloodgivelife.org.

Q. Why don't the new criteria apply to donors older than 19 years on other blood drives?

A. Young donors are more likely to have reactions than older donors. More than half of the injuries at collection sites affect individuals younger than 19 years. Older donors are less likely to have low blood volume, less likely to experience reactions, and fewer would be affected by the new criteria than young donors.

Q. Why are the height and weight cutoffs for boys and girls different?

A. A person's total blood volume depends on their gender, height and weight. The body mass composition of boys is different from girls. Consequently, a different formula is used to calculate the total circulating blood volume for male and female donors. Male donors have greater muscle mass, less fat, and higher blood volumes than female donors who are otherwise the same height and weight.

About the American Red Cross

Governed by volunteers and supported by giving individuals and communities, the American Red Cross is the single largest supplier of blood products to hospitals throughout the United States. While local hospital needs are always met first, the Red Cross also helps ensure no patient goes without blood no matter where or when they need it. In addition to providing nearly half of the nation's blood supply, the Red Cross provides relief to victims of disaster, trains millions in lifesaving skills, serves as a communication link between U.S. military members and their families, and assists victims of international disasters or conflicts.

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If you have any questions, please contact:

Badger-Hawkeye (Madison): Sarah Stevermer at 608-227-1273 or stevermers@usa.redcross.org

Heart of America (Peoria): Karen Stecher at 309-636-4422 or stecherkm@usa.redcross.org

Midwest (Omaha): April Opplinger at 402-492-2149 or oppligera@usa.redcross.org

North Central (St. Paul): Jill Applegate at 651-291-3290 or applegatej@usa.redcross.org

River Valley (Louisville): Loni White at 502-540-7092 or whitelb@usa.redcross.org

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