



“We Need People to Start Turning Out in Force to Give Blood” FDA Urging People to Donate Blood as Coronavirus Fears Intensify

(Washington, DC – March 12, 2020) – “We need people to start turning out in force to give blood.” That urgent call-to-action coming from Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D., director of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, as fear about the coronavirus is keeping people from wanting to donate blood.

Over the past week, blood centers throughout the country are experiencing a significant drop in donations which is limiting the ability for the nation’s blood supply to be adequately replenished.

“We need people to prevent the blood supply from getting depleted. We need it not to get to the point that surgeries are having to get canceled.” That’s something we absolutely do not want to have happen. To ensure an adequate blood supply we need people to come out and donate blood”, said Dr. Marks.

The coronavirus does not pose any known risk to blood donors during the donation process or from attending blood drives.

“It is safe to donate blood,” said Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D. Assistant Secretary for Health. “Part of preparedness includes a robust blood supply. Healthy individuals should schedule an appointment to donate today to ensure that blood is available for those patients who need it,” said Giroir.

Blood centers are regulated by the FDA and must follow specific guidelines to ensure safe blood is available for patients at all times.

The comments from the federal agencies come as the entire blood banking community is uniting in urging people to donate blood and for organizations to keep hosting blood drives.

“Blood donors are needed now more than ever. We cannot wait for the situation to intensify further before taking action. The blood supply cannot be taken for granted and the coronavirus only heightens the need for a ready blood supply,” said Kate Fry, chief executive officer of America’s Blood Centers, the organization that represents close to 50 blood centers throughout the U.S. and Canada who collect close to 60% of the nation’s blood supply.

“Blood drives across the country are being canceled. This is going to end up in an unprecedented situation if we’re not careful,” said Chris Hrouda, president of Biomedical Services for the American Red Cross. “We are doing everything in our power to ensure that we don’t get to a critical level of the blood supply. If we continue to see blood drives cancel, we are going to reach a level of inventory of which we haven’t seen in the past,” said Hrouda.

“Blood is an essential part of health care and the need for blood is constant,” said Debra BenAvram, CEO of AABB, the association that accredits the majority of blood banks in the United States. “In the United States, a patient is treated with a blood transfusion every two seconds. This is only possible through the generosity of our country’s volunteer blood donors. They are the heroes who make lifesaving treatment a reality,” said BenAvram.

The Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP), the official blood collector of the U.S. Military, is also echoing the call of its civilian counterparts. “As the U.S. Military’s official blood program, we always have a mission to stand

ready. We are asking if you are able and eligible, consider donating. Take the time to help us stand mission-ready," said Colonel Audra L. Taylor, ASBP Division Chief, Combat Support, Defense Health Agency.

The FDA has reiterated that there have been no reported or suspected cases of transfusion-transmitted coronavirus and the virus poses no known risk to patients receiving blood transfusions.,