COVID-19 Pandemic, Wildfires, and Hurricanes all Impact National Blood Supply

Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center joins blood industry leaders in national appeal for donors

(October 20, 2020 | Earth City, Missouri) – As cases of COVID-19 infection increase across our region, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center (MVRBC) is calling on eligible donors to support the local blood supply. The appeal for donors comes as the blood industry responds to increasing demand for blood components to combat the impact of wildfires in the western United States as well as recent hurricanes and other storms, all of which have contributed to a significant decrease in the national blood supply.

In our region, MVRBC is the provider of blood and blood components to more than 115 hospitals in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Locally, this includes the SSM Health System (including SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital and SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital), Mercy (including Mercy Hospital Jefferson, Mercy Hospital Lincoln, Mercy Hospital St. Louis, Mercy Hospital South, and Mercy Hospital Washington), St. Luke’s Hospital in Chesterfield, and multiple locations of the Hospital Sisters Health System. To schedule a donation, call (800) 747-5401, schedule online at www.bloodcenter.org, or via the Blood Center’s mobile app www.bloodcenter.org/app.

The appeal for donors comes as the majority of U.S. blood providers report significant declines in blood collection and as the industry issues a joint statement urging donors across the U.S. to give blood. The industry statement on the blood supply reads, in part:

Since the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the blood community has experienced unprecedented fluctuations in both supply and the need for blood. A variety of events—including wildfires in the western states, recent hurricanes and other storms—have led to additional disruptions to the collection of blood, compounding the impact of canceled blood drives at schools, businesses and community organizations due to remote work and closures. At the same time, the need for blood continues to increase as more hospitals throughout the country resume normal surgery schedules and more patients require blood.

The impact of COVID-19 as flu season approaches could further compound challenges to maintaining a readily available blood supply for patients in need of life-saving treatments this fall and winter. Blood donors are needed now to help maintain the adequacy of the blood supply and to ensure that blood is available. Blood has a short shelf-life and the supply must constantly be replenished.

Blood Donors Make a Difference!

Ella received two units of blood during surgery for scoliosis two years ago. Now 16 and eligible to donate, she recently gave blood for the first time with her mother, Elaine, who leads the Blood Center’s Quality team. “I’m very thankful for the people who give blood here so I could feel better,” said Ella.

Click here to view their story.
Amanda Hess, Director, Donor and Public Relations, notes the impact of decreasing donations and increasing demand for blood. “Recent trends in the rate of blood donation are not sustainable for the long-term,” said Hess. “Although we have kept blood components available for patient care in our region, demand for blood is constant and donations are continually in use. We must increase our inventories to continue meeting patient needs.”

Donor Promotions: choice of T-shirt or gift card

The Blood Center is providing all presenting donors with a voucher to redeem for their choice of a blood donor T-shirt or gift card. And through Oct. 25, donors will earn Double Points in the Blood Center’s online Donor Loyalty Store. Points are redeemable for exclusive donor gifts such as apparel, drinkware, phone accessories, and more.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Blood donation is considered an essential service for health care and has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Blood Center has taken steps to ensure blood drives will remain an acceptable activity under federal, state, and local public health guidelines. Masks or facial coverings are required for all staff and donors at Donor Centers and blood drives, and all donors are required to make an appointment for donation. By eliminating walk-in donations during the pandemic, the Blood Center can exert greater control over donor flow and social distancing.

To maintain a safe, hygienic environment at Donor Centers and blood drives:

• All staff and donors are now required to wear a face covering while inside Donor Centers or participating in a mobile blood drive. Paper masks will be provided for those who arrive without their own mask or facial covering.
• Donors are now required to make appointments for donation. To maintain social distancing and appropriate donor flow, walk-ins will only be accepted when an appointment slot is available.
• Please do not give blood if you are experiencing any symptoms of a COVID-19 infection or have in the last 14 days been within six feet of someone who has the virus or is being tested for the virus for greater than 15 minutes without use of personal protective equipment.
• Prior to donation, donors are screened for symptoms of illness (body temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and hemoglobin level all are checked, and the donor completes a pre-donation Donor History Questionnaire).
• When possible, donors are asked to complete the Donor History Questionnaire online on the same day as their donation (see www.bloodcenter.org/EarlyQ)
• Staff have added space between chairs in screening areas and in the post-donation refreshment area. Between donations, staff wipe down chairs and surfaces to maintain a safe, hygienic environment.

About Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center

Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center (MVRBC) is the exclusive provider of blood products and services to more than 115 hospitals in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin, including more than two dozen hospitals across the St. Louis Metropolitan Region. These hospitals include the SSM Health System (including SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital and SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital), Mercy (including Mercy Hospital Jefferson, Mercy Hospital Lincoln, Mercy Hospital St. Louis, Mercy Hospital South, and Mercy Hospital Washington), St. Luke’s Hospital in Chesterfield, and multiple locations of the Hospital Sisters Health System.

For more information, see www.bloodcenter.org and the Blood Center’s social media channels: www.facebook.com/MVRBC, www.twitter.com/willyougive, and www.youtube.com/MVRBC.

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