

## Infected with herpes — Can I donate blood? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

(1) Is it safe for someone with herpes to donate blood? I know someone with HIV or hepatitis should not, but what I've read suggests that herpes doesn't hang out in the blood. I used to be a regular donor, but since I contracted herpes some years ago, I've stopped. Would it be safe (for the recipient, of course) for me to start again?

(2) If you have genital herpes can you still give blood?

### Answer

Dear readers,

Your thoughtfulness is much appreciated by the recipients of your blood donations! While you are correct that persons infected with HIV or hepatitis are not able to give blood, people who have herpes are generally not restricted from donating. However, during a **primary** outbreak of herpes (the first outbreak), a person infected with herpes should not donate blood. The very first time the symptoms of herpes manifest, it's possible for a small amount of the virus to enter the bloodstream. Also, it is generally not advisable to donate blood when you're not feeling well, be it due to a primary or recurrent outbreak of herpes, the flu, or another illness. When you're sick, your body is already trying to fight off an infection, and giving blood at such a time can put a little extra strain on your body.

Beyond the concern for the donor's well-being, it is *okay* to donate blood during a **recurrent** outbreak of herpes, as long as you are feeling otherwise healthy. When the virus is in an **asymptomatic** phase, there's really no question as to whether or not you can donate blood — *you can*. When it comes to herpes and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) the American Red Cross notes:

- People with syphilis and/or gonorrhea should wait 12 months after treatment before donating blood
- People with chlamydia, HPV (genital warts), and/or genital or oral herpes may donate as long as they are feeling healthy and meet the other eligibility requirements
- As noted earlier, people with HIV or hepatitis are not able to donate blood. In addition,

people who have been exposed to hepatitis or HIV may be restricted from donating.

A number of other health conditions may impact your ability to donate blood. You can check out the [American Red Cross eligibility guidelines](#) [2] to find out more or to look up your specific medical issues and whether you can be a donor.

Blood donors are almost always in hot demand, and if you are eligible, your donation would be greatly appreciated. Thanks for the thoughtful, concerned questions.

Alice!

Category:

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[Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\)](#) [4]

[Herpes](#) [5]

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donate-blood

### **Links**

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/infected-herpes-%E2%80%94-can-i-donate-blood>
- [2] [http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0\\_557\\_,00.html#std](http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/0,1082,0_557_,00.html#std)
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexual-reproductive-health>
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