

How safe is the blood supply in the United States?

The U.S. blood supply is among the safest in the world. Nearly all people infected with HIV through blood transfusions received those transfusions before 1985, the year HIV testing began for all donated blood.

The Public Health Service has recommended an approach to blood safety in the United States that includes stringent donor selection practices and the use of screening tests. U.S. blood donations have been screened for antibodies to HIV-1 since March 1985 and HIV-2 since June 1992. The p24 Antigen test was added in 1996. Blood and blood products that test positive for HIV are safely discarded and are not used for transfusions.

Tests Performed on Each Unit of Donated Blood* (Source: American Red Cross)

Disease	Test	Year Implemented
HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS HIV- I Antibody test	1985
	HIV-1/2 Antibody test	1992
	HIV-I p24 Antigen test	1996
HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C	Nucleic Acid Test (NAT)	1999
Hepatitis C	Hepatitis C Anti-HCV	1990
Hepatitis B	Hepatitis B Surface Antigen test	1971
	Hepatitis B Core Antibody	1987
Hepatitis	Hepatitis ALT	1986
Syphilis	Syphilis Serologic test	1948
Human T-cell Lymphotropic Virus (HTLV)	HTLV-I Antibody	1989
	HTLV -I/II Antibody	1998

The improvement of processing methods for blood products also has reduced the number of infections resulting from the use of these products.

Currently, the risk of infection with HIV in the United States through receiving a blood transfusion or blood products is extremely low and has become progressively lower, even in geographic areas with high HIV prevalence rates.

* This list is subject to change as new blood safety opportunities and requirements emerge. Additional tests may be performed to meet special patient needs.

Last Modified: October 20, 2006

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