

HEALTH

Why blood donation from the Black community is so crucial

African-American individuals make up 13% of U.S. population, but less than 3% of blood donors, according to Red Cross

Dawn Jorgenson

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Two vials of blood. (Photo by Karolina Grabowska from Pexels.)



You hear it often: There's a need for blood donors -- but there's apparently a particular need for the Black community to step up and donate.

The most common genetic blood disease in the United States is sickle cell disease, **according to American Red Cross**, and blood donors who are Black play a critical role in helping those who suffer from the disease.

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While the race of blood donors doesn't usually matter -- as long as the blood types are compatible -- those who are part of the Black community (including African American or others of African descent) have unique protein structures that can make it hard to find compatible units of blood in other donor populations.

The Red Cross says those who suffer from sickle cell are more likely to find a compatible blood match from a blood donor of the same race or ethnicity.

“While the science of blood antigens can be complicated, the simple fact is, individuals who are Black have unique antigens on their red blood cells that must be closely matched for patients with sickle cell disease,” the [Red Cross website states](#).

While the Red Cross is working to address blood-related medical concerns that are prevalent in Black populations, currently, the organization says, there are not enough blood donors to help meet the need, as “African American individuals make up 13% of the U.S. population, but less than 3% of blood donors.”



Experts with Red Cross say the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the challenges that patients with sickle cell face, as there has been a lack of availability of care and access to blood products needed for their treatment.

[Dawn Jorgenson](#) on patient should not have to worry about is the availability of a closely matched blood product to ease their pain,” the Red

Cross website says. Dawn Jorgenson, Graham Media Group Branded Content Managing Editor, began working with the group in April 2013. She graduated from Texas State University with a degree in electronic media.

 [email](#) If you are interested in donating blood, [click or tap here](#) to learn more or to find a location near you.

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