

World Blood Donor Day

“Celebrating the gift of blood” 14 JUNE 2011

Announcing World Blood Donor Day, 14 June 2011

More blood. More life.

On 14 June 2011, countries worldwide will celebrate World Blood Donor Day with events to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank voluntary unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood.

The theme for World Blood Donor Day 2011 is, “**More blood. More life.**” This theme reinforces the urgent need for more people all over the world to become life-savers by volunteering to donate blood regularly.

Today, 62 countries have blood transfusion services based entirely on voluntary blood donation, up from 39 in 2002. In line with the 2009 Melbourne Declaration, which calls on countries to achieve 100% voluntary unpaid blood donation by the year 2020, World Blood Donor Day aims to increase blood donation by:

- Creating wider awareness of the vital role of blood transfusion in saving lives and improving the health of millions of people each year
- Motivating more individuals to become regular voluntary unpaid blood donors to ensure sufficient stocks of blood to meet national requirements, even in emergency situations
- Recognizing regular voluntary unpaid donors as public health role models; it is because they lead healthy lifestyles and are regularly screened that they are able to donate blood regularly.

Paint the world red

The scope of World Blood Donor Day events increases every year in recognition of the selfless individuals who donate their blood for people they will never meet. In 2010, countries in every part of the world celebrated with donor appreciation ceremonies, social networking campaigns, special media broadcasts, and free musical and artistic events for young people. Many countries gathered a group of people wearing red into the shape of a giant blood drop (the “human blood drop”). Support from government leaders, royalty and celebrities, along with diverse community-based and youth-oriented activities, all contributed to the festivities.

This year, WHO and partners are encouraging communities in every country to join the World Blood Donor Day campaign and “**Paint the world red**”; whether by symbolically colouring, covering or lighting monuments, popular landmarks and buildings in red; staging artistic, cultural or musical events with a red-coloured theme; or forming a “human blood drop” in prominent public places.

Each year, a host country is identified for a global event that provides the focus for an international publicity campaign. The event is also designed to support national blood transfusion services, blood donor organizations and other nongovernmental organizations in strengthening and expanding their voluntary blood donor programmes and to reinforce regional, national and local campaigns. The 2011 global event will take place in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**, hosted by the Government of Argentina.

Over the coming months, the WHO World Blood Donor Day web page (www.who.int/worldblooddonorday) will present more information and promotional materials as well as additional resources in different languages, including details about World Blood Donor Day news and events. You are invited to contribute by sharing your ideas, resource materials and plans for activities through this web site.

Growing need for safe blood

The need for safe and secure supplies of blood and blood products is universal. Worldwide, at least 90 million units of blood are donated each year to save lives and improve health. However, demand for blood for transfusion continues to increase, and many countries cannot meet existing needs. In many regions, this means inadequate supplies to replace blood lost in childbirth (a major cause of maternal deaths) and to treat anaemia that threatens the lives of children who have malaria or are undernourished. Everywhere, blood and blood products are needed for routine and emergency surgery, including life-saving treatment for growing numbers of people injured in road traffic accidents, and for treating congenital blood disorders.

Globally, more than 70 countries¹ have blood donation rates less than what is generally considered necessary to meet a nation's basic requirements for blood, namely 1% of the population; the requirements are higher in countries with advanced health care systems. Even countries with higher donation rates often struggle to maintain blood stocks that are sufficient to meet the requirements for a range of increasingly sophisticated medical and surgical procedures. A stable base of voluntary unpaid blood donors who give regularly is the foundation of a safe and adequate blood supply. In addition, evidence shows that voluntary donors are at lower risk of transmitting life-threatening infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C through their blood than family and replacement donors and, especially, paid donors.

Working together for World Blood Donor Day

Your involvement and support will help to ensure a wide impact for World Blood Donor Day 2011, increasing recognition worldwide that giving blood is a life-saving act of solidarity and that services providing safe blood and blood products are an essential element of every health care system.

Enthusiasm and participation of interested partners is welcomed at all levels to make World Blood Donor Day a success. International organizations, including the World Health Organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion, and others, continue to work in close collaboration to provide guidance and support to their membership in this endeavour. We look forward to expanding this network in 2011 and beyond. To find out more about how your organizations can become involved, contact us through: worldblooddonorday@who.int

We wish you a successful and joyful celebration.

¹ All are low- and middle-income countries.