

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Latest Update from Southern Blood Services

As it has always been, the safety and security of our donors and staff remains our highest priority. News regarding the spread of the coronavirus, COVID-19, in our area is evolving rapidly. Be assured that I continue to monitor the ever-changing international and local situation. Given this uncertainty, and the fact that the seasonal influenza (flu) virus is also widespread, we are taking proactive steps to address several concerns.

We have been focused on doing the things we need to do to keep our families, friends and co-workers safe. We take great pride in maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene. In response to the coronavirus, we have taken additional measures developed in consultation with global and local public health authorities (including the WHO, FDA and CDC) to make our cleaning and hygiene protocols even more rigorous. We have increased the frequency of cleaning our areas and have continued the use of hospital-grade disinfectant.

We also want to ensure the continuity of business operations in order to continue to supply lifesaving medicines.

I ask all donors to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases, in the workplace, home and at the center. Our recommendations are:

## **Good Hygiene Practices**

- Stay home when you are sick. It is critical that donors do not attempt to donate while they are experiencing respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available use Purell or another alcohol-based hand gel.
- Avoid touching your face with your hands.
- When sneezing or coughing always cover your nose/mouth with a tissue or bent elbow to reduce spread of respiratory droplets.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice social distancing.
- Refrain from shaking hands and hugging/kissing when meeting someone.
- If you or a family member is sick disinfect with 1:100 bleach/water solution including common touch points:
  - Door handles/knobs
  - Light switches
  - Chairs
  - Toilet handles
  - Soap dispensers
  - Faucets
  - Bottom edges of tables

## **Outside**

To help prevent the spread and protect yourself avoid:

- Congregate settings are crowded public places where close contact with others may occur, such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums.
- Social distancing means remaining out of congregated settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible.

## **In the Center**

As far as the plasma and plasma donation are concerned:

- According to the FDA there have been no reported or suspected cases of COVID-19 due to plasma donation.
- We measure the temperature of every donor as part of the routine donor screening process.
- For you, our return donors, every center will take measures to limit the total number of donors and employees in the center at any one time to ensure appropriate social distancing.
- Routine plasma donor screening measures – which already includes travel deferrals – are already in place to prevent individuals from donating plasma who show typical disease symptoms (raised temperature/ fever, cough, difficulty breathing) of a coronavirus infection, including COVID-19.
- We are taking extra measures to ensure the safety of our donors such as extra travel deferrals, extra cleaning procedures, and we are continuing to evaluate the situation.
- It is critical that those who are healthy continue to donate plasma. Without healthy donors, we could see a shortage of plasma and lifesaving medicines.
- Your plasma for the final product is safe. The coronavirus, COVID-19, is a large sized virus (approximately 120 nm in diameter). The relatively large size and lipid envelope makes it highly susceptible to steps such as virus inactivation and filter removal during the manufacturing process.

These guidelines represent our best judgment, at this moment, about practical steps we can all take to reduce risk for ourselves and for each other.

I know that both the spread of this disease and our decisions about it affect not only our company, but the lives of our donors and staff. For many of you, the steps we are taking to protect the health of the community may involve significant inconvenience and sacrifice. Please accept my gratitude in advance for your effort and understanding.

Please rest assured that we are monitoring this developing situation closely and are prepared to navigate through these challenging circumstances. Most importantly we want everyone to know that it is perfectly safe to donate plasma currently and that we appreciate you for giving as always. Thank you for your trust in Southern Blood Services.

As this is a rapidly evolving situation, please call for current hours and donation dates

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.