

# Kids

## Calling the Shots

### Q • What do different blood types mean?

**Answer:** To simplify a very complex topic, blood type is determined by antigens on a person's red blood cells. An antigen, when introduced into a foreign body, stimulates the production of antibodies. The antibody then attacks the foreign antigen (viruses, bacteria and other invaders of the body). Antigens present on the red blood cell surface determine the blood type. Blood is classified as type A, B, O, or AB and as Rh Positive or Negative.

When a patient needs a blood transfusion, testing is done to determine his or her blood type. The information is used to select blood products that will have acceptable survival in the patient's blood and will not cause harm to the patient's own red blood cells. If the wrong blood type is given to a person, a reaction can result. This is because the blood thinks that the new, transfused blood is invading the body and it begins to attack and destroy cells. Reactions can cause serious illness and sometimes death. Testing, prior to the transfusion, provides the information needed to avoid these reactions.

In a hospital, most simple procedures do not require blood transfusions. But, transfusions are needed for major surgery like open heart, removal of lung, organ transplants, severe burn treatment and cancer treatments.

Durham Regional Hospital Blood Bank is a transfusion service where pre-transfusion testing is done and where blood is received from the American Red Cross to transfuse to patients. All blood types are needed for patients. However, donor shortages cause dangerous shortages of Type O Blood, which is the universal donor type (meaning, it can be transfused to all blood types). For more information about the American Red Cross, call 919-489-6541 or go online to [www.durhamredcross.org](http://www.durhamredcross.org).

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Durham Regional Hospital Blood Bank

### Did You Know?

Many middle and high schools have Red Cross youth clubs. These clubs provide training in CPR, first aid, peer information about HIV/AIDS and instructional information about blood drives. By joining, students help their community, meet new people and gain self-esteem.



**Durham Regional Hospital**  
DUKE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

### ATTENTION STUDENTS!

Submit your questions! Call Jackie Pierce 419-6539; email: [jpierce@heraldsun.com](mailto:jpierce@heraldsun.com); or mail to: The Herald-Sun, P.O. Box 2092, Durham, NC 27702 - Attention: NIE