

**For Immediate Release**



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## **“Mad Cow” Blood Donor Ban Lifted** **More people eligible to donate starting January 18**

*Bloodworks to reinstate 10,000 potential local donors previously deferred for blood donations based on criteria relating to risk exposure to variant CJD*

**(January 18, 2023, Seattle, WA)** – Based on updated FDA Guidance, [Bloodworks Northwest](#) has inactivated deferrals to donate for 10,000 potential donors who were previously deferred from blood donation due to travel or residence in the United Kingdom, France, or Ireland. Based on review of recent evidence, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued new blood donor eligibility guidance removing several deferral recommendations associated with risk for Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) and variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). This means more people are now be eligible to donate blood. ([See Guidance](#))

“Bloodworks Northwest welcomes new and returning donors to roll up their sleeves,” said Dr. Kirsten Alcorn, Co-Chief Medical Officer at Bloodworks Northwest. “We hope to see donors who were previously deferred come back to donate and reach many more people who will be trying to donate for the first time. If you believe you may now be eligible to donate, please give us a call.”

The new FDA guidance removes the deferral recommendations for geographically-associated risk of Mad Cow Disease for time spent in the United Kingdom (1980 – 1996); time spent in France and Ireland (1980 – 2001); receipt of a blood transfusion in the U.K., France or Ireland (1980 – present). As of 2020, there is also no deferral for time spent in the Military in Europe. Donors will still need to answer CJD/vCJD questions on the health history questionnaire even though the answer will no longer be a cause for deferral. Donors must also meet all other [eligibility requirements](#) to donate blood. Bloodworks has started reaching out to individuals who made an effort to donate in the past and were deferred under the previous criteria to encourage them to learn about the updated eligibility criteria and [book appointments](#).

“At Bloodworks, we often hear from people wishing they could donate but can’t due to the mad cow deferral,” said Meg Hall, Director of Community Engagement and Expansion. “We’re excited this change will allow a larger portion of the population to donate lifesaving blood.” Meg, whose father’s job in the

Navy led her family to live in Scotland in the 1980s will also be giving blood for the first time in January due to the end of the mad cow deferral ban.

The change comes during National Blood Donor Month and a critical time for the local blood supply. Bloodworks Northwest recently issued a “Code Red” emergency asking everyone who is eligible and feeling healthy to book appointments to give blood. Right now, the universal [Type O blood](#) is extremely important, especially for trauma and emergency situations when the patient’s blood type is unknown.

A special Bloodworks 101 podcast episode is available for download featuring interviews with Dr. Kirsten Alcorn and Meg Hall on the history of the FDA’s mad cow deferral and importance of the change impacting an estimated 1% of the U.S. population’s ability to donate blood:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/775991/12025900>

**Dr. Kirsten Alcorn is available for interviews. Contact John Yeager [yjeager@bloodworksnw.org](mailto:yjeager@bloodworksnw.org) or 425-765-9845**

#### **About Donating Blood:**

- Most people in good health, at least 18 years old, and who weigh at least 110 pounds can donate whole blood every 56 days. See website for ages 16 & 17. Masks and appointments required. Donors can donate blood ten days after COVID symptoms resolve, and COVID and Flu vaccinations do not affect your ability to donate blood. Check out [our detailed eligibility Q&A](#) or call us at 800-398-7888.
- It takes about an hour to give blood from check-in to post-donation cookie. Information about [who can donate](#) and where, is available at [www.bloodworksnw.org](http://www.bloodworksnw.org).

#### **Bloodworks Donor Centers and Blood Drives:**

Appointments and information at [BloodworksNW.org](http://BloodworksNW.org) or 800-398-7888. See our list of [Donor Centers](#) and [Blood Drives](#).

#### **About Bloodworks Northwest – About Bloodworks Northwest**

*Donations to Bloodworks Northwest provide lifesaving blood supply to 95% of Pacific Northwest hospitals. Since 1944, Bloodworks has served the Pacific Northwest as a local, nonprofit, independent, volunteer-supported and community-based blood center and research institute. Bloodworks partners closely with local hospitals to deliver the highest level of patient care. Its comprehensive services include blood components, complex cross-matching, specialized lab services for organ transplants, care for patients with blood disorders and collection of cord blood stem cells for cancer treatment. Bloodworks Research Institute performs leading-edge research in blood biology, transfusion medicine, blood storage and treatment of blood disorders. Patients with traumatic injuries, undergoing surgeries or organ transplantation, or receiving treatment for cancer and blood disorders all depend on its services, expertise, laboratories and research. Blood donation appointments can be scheduled at [BloodworksNW.org](http://BloodworksNW.org).*