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Updated Recommended Guidance for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 for Blood and Plasma Collection

I. Background

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contact (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets. Transmission of SAR-CoV-2 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented yet, but current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of material. One primary measure discussed in this guidance will be cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection – a best practice for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses at locations used for blood drives.

II. Purpose

This guidance provides recommendations for blood drive operations and the sites that are used for blood drive collections. Early evidence suggests that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread more easily than the virus that causes seasonal influenza, and it appears that the COVID-19 disease is more deadly than seasonal influenza. There are some precautions that persons at blood drives can follow to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

III. Symptoms

Clinical features are fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illnesses. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Human coronaviruses can sometimes cause lower-respiratory tract illnesses, such as pneumonia or bronchitis.

IV. Transmission

Human coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- the air by coughing and sneezing;
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands;
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands; and
- rarely, fecal contamination.

V. The Coronavirus and Blood Donations

It is essential to continue collecting blood and blood components to support healthcare delivery. This guidance is for administration, staff, and volunteers at blood and plasma collection facilities.

Public health guidance may shift. Be aware of updates to local and state public health recommendations and if COVID-19 becomes more widespread and/or more clinically severe.

CDC is working with FDA, state and local health departments, and other HHS agencies to monitor COVID-19 and its potential impact on blood availability and blood safety. CDC and other HHS agencies are also continuing to work with the AABB Interorganizational Disaster Task Force to enhance preparedness.

VI. Infection Control and Environmental Management

This information reinforces routine measures that are currently followed by blood centers, provides additional public health measures, and complements CDC's interim infection prevention and control recommendations. Refer to FDA's recommendations for donor and product management. These measures will help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Adhere to routine infection control procedures, including appropriate respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette and sharps handling precautions for preventing the transmission of infectious agents.

Follow hand hygiene guidance to help prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. If gloves are used, change gloves and cleanse hands between contact with different blood donors.

With regard to staff safety, the wearing of gloves and hand cleansing are governed by OSHA requirements pertaining to bloodborne pathogens in 29 CFR 1910.1030(c)(3)(ix) and 29 CFR 1910.1030 (d)(iii)–(vi) respectively.

Clean and disinfect environmental surfaces in accordance with standard facility protocols after each donor has vacated the station and before setting up for arrival of a new donor at that station. Ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly.

Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures are appropriate in healthcare settings, including those patient-care areas in which aerosol-generating procedures are performed (e.g., using cleaners and water to pre-clean surfaces prior to applying an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant to frequently touched surfaces or objects for appropriate contact times as indicated on the product's label). Refer to List N for EPA-registered disinfectants that have qualified under EPA's emerging viral pathogens program for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Assess yourself each day before leaving for work for symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms, remain at home and contact the established point of contact (public health authorities or their facility's occupational health program) for medical evaluation prior to returning to work. If symptoms develop while at work, cease collection facility activities, notify supervisor, minimize contact with others in facility, and go home promptly.

VII. **Know the Latest on Deferral of Blood and Plasma Donors**

Follow current recommendations for the screening and potential deferral of blood and plasma donors, available in FDA's Updated Information for Blood Establishments Regarding the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak.

VIII. **Take Steps to Support and Educate Staff and volunteers**

- Designate a time to meet with your staff and volunteers to educate them on COVID-19 and what they may need to do to prepare.
- Talk to them about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and actions blood collection centers are taking to protect them.
- Instruct staff and volunteers not to report to work when ill. Implement and reinforce sick leave policies that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health guidance.
- Evaluate staff, volunteers, and prospective donors for COVID-19-like symptoms as they enter the collection site. Ask individuals with COVID-19-like symptoms to leave to reduce the risk of viral transmission.
- Arrange seating for prospective donors in the waiting area at least 6 feet apart prior to implementing donor questionnaire.
- Adjust the physical configuration of the donor cots during blood collection so that donors are at least 6 feet apart.

IX. **Resources**

- CDC Blood and Plasma Donation - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/blood-and-plasma-collection.html>
- CDC What to do if you are sick - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-aresick/index.html>
- CDC When and How to Wash Your Hands - <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-howhandwashing.html>
- CDC People At-risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html#stayhome>
- CDC Print Resources - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>