

# Rare Blood Program

Information intended for  
persons with a rare blood  
type and their family



HÉMA-QUÉBEC



# What does it mean to have rare blood?

First, you should know that having a rare blood type is not an illness.

Instead, rare blood is an exceptional condition. One in a thousand people (1/1000) worldwide has a rare blood type, which makes it... one could say, a rare pearl.

Rare blood is inherited.

Just like the colour of your eyes and hair, the blood group you belong to is hereditary.

• Did you know? •

**Héma-Québec is the organization responsible for efficiently meeting the needs of the Québec population for quality blood and other biological products of human origin.**

• Did you know? •





## A few facts about blood groups!

At first glance, a drop of blood from one person looks no different than that of the next person. But in reality, red blood cells differ from one individual to another. Red blood cells have substances called antigens on their surface, which we inherit from our parents. The type of antigen present determines your blood group.

Perhaps you are familiar with the common blood groups: A, B, O and AB, as well as the Rh positive and negative factors.

But you may be surprised to learn that, apart from these blood groups, there are more than 600 known antigens. Some combinations are rarer than others.

Finding a compatible donor for a recipient with a rare blood type can sometimes be a major challenge.

## Where can you find blood that is compatible with yours?

Finding a donor with rare blood can seem like a veritable treasure hunt. Sometimes, it can even become a worldwide race against the clock!

In the case of a patient with rare blood who needs a blood transfusion, for example in preparation for surgery, childbirth or following an accident, Héma-Québec searches among its rare blood donors to find a compatible match.

If your health allows it, you could donate blood to add to the collective blood reserve. Your donation could help save a life: your life, that of a family member or another person with a compatible rare blood type.

• Good news •

**Rare blood is frozen  
at -80°C and can be kept  
for 10 years.**

• Good news •





## Your family: a valuable ally!

In the case of rare blood, Héma-Québec calls on family members, more specifically brothers and sisters, to conduct a family study. Remember that blood type is inherited.

A family study consists of donating blood or collecting blood to determine if siblings have a rare blood type. If this proves to be the case, the siblings will be invited to return regularly to donate blood at the nearest Héma-Québec blood centre.

By taking part in a family study, you and your family can help increase Héma-Québec's reserve of rare blood to meet constantly growing transfusion needs.

## Act now!

Héma-Québec has created a Rare Blood Program to inform the community about what rare blood is and to promote the need to increase the collective supply.

A collective effort is needed to save lives! It is important that people with rare blood donate their blood regularly. This starts with you!

**By returning the consent form,  
you authorize Héma-Québec to contact you  
to take part in the Rare Blood Program\***

Héma-Québec offers personalized guidance to each participant in the Rare Blood Program throughout the process, from start to finish, for both you and members of your family.

\* If you are already a registered Héma-Québec blood donor, this step is not required. We will communicate directly with you.

• Spread the word •  
**Donating blood is a lifesaving gift.  
Become a rare blood donor and talk  
to your family about it!**  
• Spread the word •



**Do you have questions?  
Contact us.**

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