

WEDNESDAY 5TH MARCH

Australian James Harrison had chest surgery when he was 14 years old and required a blood transfusion in order to survive. He vowed to donate blood himself when he turned 18 years old.

When he first gave blood it was noticed that his blood contained an unusually large and **persistent** number of antibodies against the D-Rhesus antigen found on red blood cells. These antibodies are used to treat HDN, a disease which affects newborn babies who have a different blood type to their mothers. Before the development of the 'anti-D' treatment (using James' blood plasma) HDN had a 50% fatality rate.

James donated blood plasma a world record 1173 times, every two to three weeks from the age of 18 until the age of 81, despite being scared of needles! He only stopped because he became too old by Australian blood donation rules. He is estimated to have saved the lives of 2.4 million babies in 63 years of donating including one of his grandsons and two of his great-grandchildren.

He was never once paid or compensated for his donations. In fact he was critical of plans to open the Australian blood donation service to foreign corporations as he believed it would discourage people from volunteering. James Harrison died in his sleep this week at the age of 88 ([ABC News video](#))



- What do you think James' motivations were for donating?
- Do you know anyone who donates blood? What is their motivation?
- Would you like to donate blood when you're able?
- In the UK, like Australia, blood donors are unpaid volunteers. Is this right or should they be paid?