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Bombay blood group: bound by rare blood and much goodwill

At a time when blood banks are making donation a greatly efficient process, the Bombay blood group alone is helped along by the sheer goodwill of its rare donors.

[Shreya Pareek](#) Jul 26, 2013

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A week ago, Adesh Gajre, a youngster from Badlapur, braved the Mumbai monsoon, caught the choc-a-bloc suburban railway at 8:30 pm, rushed to a blood bank that was kept open just for him, to give blood to someone in far off Kochi who desperately needed it. The reason for the rush? Gajre is one of the 400 people living in India with the rarest of the rare blood groups, Bombay O or Bombay Oh, a type of blood that cannot be stored in blood banks.

Discovered over 50 years ago in Bombay, those with this rare blood group have red blood cells that completely lack the ABO blood group antigens.

At a time when blood bank systems are making blood donation a greatly efficient process, the Bombay blood group alone is helped along by the sheer goodwill of donors who turn up at the eleventh hour. In the last 5-6 years, no one has died due to the want of Bombay blood.



Third Bombay Blood Group meet in bangalore organized by Sankalp Indis foundation brought together many families of this rare blood type

A doctor from Red Cross Blood bank said, “The problem is, even if people are of Bombay blood group they aren’t aware of it. Last month, we received a request from a hospital of O negative blood group. But after we tested further the blood group was found to be Bombay blood group and not O negative and we urgently arranged for it somehow,” she added.

Ankita from Sankalp India Foundation, that maintains a registry for these blood donors, said “Yes, arranging for Bombay blood group is a major problem for us as there are hardly a handful of donors.” Out of the estimated 400 donors, 103 are on the State Blood Transfusion Registry list.

Kiran, a 13-year-old boy Thalassemia patient was admitted in Indira Gandhi Hospital in Bangalore, needing at least 1 unit of blood every twenty days. His family lived in a nearby village, and had to come all the way to Bangalore to collect the blood. The problem arises when they don’t come on time and as a result the haemoglobin level of the kid falls to 3-4. In that case, at least 2-3 units of blood are required urgently. “Since last year we have received 52 Bombay Blood group request with average of 2 units of blood per request. We have provided blood on time to all the requests,” said Ankita.

“I got to know that I belong to this blood group 4 years back. And since then I’ve been a regular donor because I’ve seen how difficult it is to arrange this blood group,” says Satish, a donor from Bangalore. “People of this blood group are very co-operative. They don’t hesitate in donating when needed as they know the seriousness of this situation. This has helped a lot to handle the critical situation,” says Anuradha, a doctor.

Some Facts about Bombay Blood Group

The Bombay blood group is a rare group except in parts of India where a frequency of 1 in 7,600 has been observed.

This Blood group can not be stored for long periods of time.

The women who possess this particular blood group are said to undergo excessive bleeding just after giving birth.

A person can donate this blood group only once in 3 months.

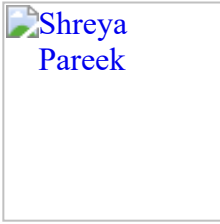
Ways to survive with this blood group

Storing blood in blood banks and using it in the future in case it is needed.

Registering with [Sankalp India Foundation](#) or [Think Foundation](#) so that blood can be arranged when needed.

Pics courtesy: Sankalp India Foundation

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Shreya Pareek is a development journalist who is passionate about grassroots change and sustainable living. Follow her on twitter [@shreya08](#) [more](#)



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