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Lives of Real Vampires: More Than a Diet of Blood

By Merticus, [Everyday Health Guest Contributor](#)

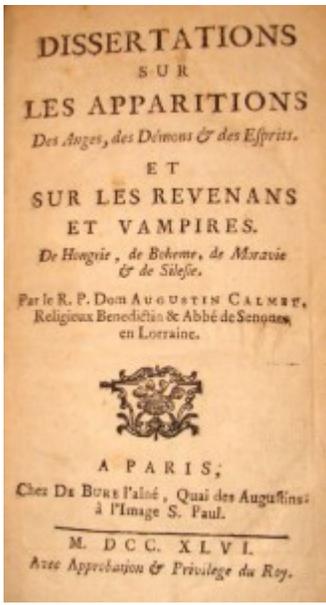
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I'm a 37-year-old man from Atlanta, Georgia, who personally identifies as a vampire. I'm also a husband; an antique dealer who specializes in architectural furnishings, antiquarian books, folios, and illuminated manuscripts; and a researcher with an interest in vampirism.

Since 2006, I've worked with a group of international researchers on how to best approach, research, and understand the vampire subculture. They include [Joseph Laycock, PhD, of Texas State University](#) and author of the seminal academic work on the vampire community, [Vampires Today: The Truth About Modern Vampirism](#), in San Marcos; sociologist [D J Williams, PhD, of Idaho State University](#) in Pocatello, literature professor [John Edgar Browning, PhD, of Georgia Tech](#) in Atlanta, and Emyr Williams, PhD, of [Glydwr University](#) in London, among others.

Surveying Vampires



In one of the largest surveys of the real vampire community ever conducted, we learned a tremendous amount about similarities and differences among vampires.

The detailed [sociological and phenomenological surveys](#), conducted by my group, the Vampirism & Energy Work Research Study ([VEWRS](#) & [AVEWRS](#)), identified more than 950 vampires in 40 countries from 2006 to 2009.

Survey results show that the vampire community is complex. Among the many things we learned are that vampires identify with two main groups based on the type of feeding. Self-identified “real vampires” report that they cannot adequately sustain their own physical, mental, or spiritual well-being without taking blood or vital life-force energy from other sources, often human. This is because, without feeding, vampires become lethargic, sickly, or depressed. They often go through physical suffering or discomfort.

1. Sanguinarian vampires feed by drinking blood — either human or animal. This type of vampire can vary in their experience of what some call “blood hunger.” But a unique craving for blood, and physical symptoms like weakness associated with neglecting to drink blood, are unifying features. Getting blood from human sources is through consensual agreement by verbal or written contract between a vampire and a donor.

2. Psychic vampires feed off of what they term the subtle life-force energy (also called prana, chi, or qi) of an individual. This psychic feeding is usually from a willing individual, or from the ambient energies of a large group or crowd.

The vampire community is a complex identity group composed of various subsets based around one’s self-identity with the concept of real vampirism and method of feeding. These individuals may be sanguinarian (blood drinkers), psychic (pranic) or energy feeding, tantric or sexual, or embrace spiritual beliefs that coalesce with their own personal vampirism. On one hand, a self-identified vampire may exhibit either physical or psychological illness while others may not present with any readily identifiable condition. Therein lies the enigma of the vampire community — participants identify as vampires for a myriad of reasons, and they represent a diverse spectrum of experience.

What Drives Vampires to Drink Blood? Is It Safe?

While most people are able to maintain healthy energy levels [through diet and exercise](#), vampires have developed alternative means to satisfy our energy needs — feeding off small amounts of blood from willing individuals. This does pose health issues. Sanguinarian vampires are very concerned about a donor's health, and want to be as sure as possible that blood is free from disease and parasites.

We require screening and [careful medical evaluation](#) of our donors, and ourselves, before imbibing blood, which we collect using medical lancets and sterilized blades. (Although some vampires in close relationships raw blood through biting, this not a sanitary or safe practice.) Vampires get to know the donor intimately, even their medical history and emotional and mental state. After feeding, donors may have a range of feelings, from a state of euphoria to complete exhaustion and even confusion. A connection between a donor and vampire can be rewarding and mutually beneficial, or psychologically unhealthy, if extreme.

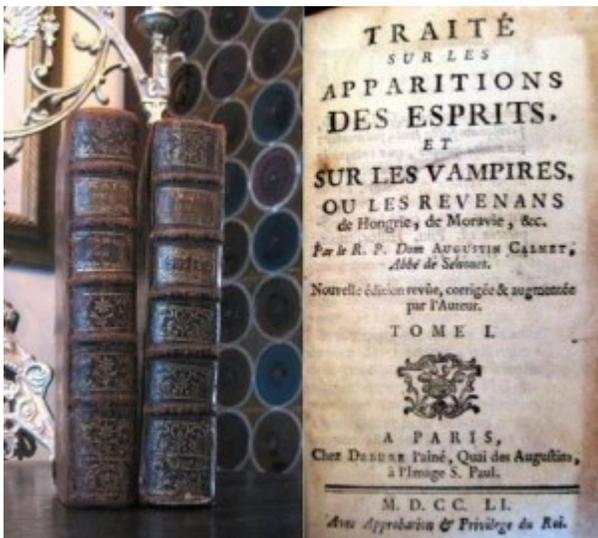
A vampire who doesn't have a donor available, may use certain foods as blood substitutes:

- Rare meat
- [Chocolate](#)
- Red wine
- Milk
- High-sugar foods

Are Vampires Mentally Ill?

Our research found no direct correlation between [real vampirism](#) and mental illness. [Ray Blanchard, PhD](#), of the paraphilias subworkgroup of the sexual and gender identity disorders work group for the [American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5](#) (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) agreed, and vampirism was not included in DSM-5 as either a mental disorder or paraphilia.

My Vampire Story: I Was Born This Way



My identity as a real vampire is lifelong — and most who identify as vampires believe they were born that way and then awakened to their vampiric nature. I don't view vampirism as a deficiency or disadvantage, and I harbor no moral reservations towards consensual feedings.

We're people you pass on the street and probably socialize with every day. Real vampires are business professionals, nurses, teachers, rocket scientists, network administrators, active military personnel, law

enforcement officers, the mom at the playground with her child, your next-door neighbor, and, just maybe, one of your closest friends. We often keep this aspect of our life secret for fear we'll be misunderstood, and to safeguard against discrimination.

We recognize how crazy it sounds when we refer to ourselves as vampires. But after explaining to people that we are human beings who believe we must take the energy or blood from others and use it for ourselves, it ultimately comes back to the word "vampire." This is simultaneously the greatest inhibitor to being understood by the general public and also one of the greatest allures of vampirism.

Coming Out of the Coffin: Real Vampire Communities

We've existed as an organized community for nearly 30 years, and in solitary, for far longer. Some have openly identified as real vampires since the late 1970s. I've personally identified as a real vampire since 1997. I spent a couple of years researching everything I could find regarding a range of psychic or unexplained experiences and in the special collection sections of university libraries.

The online vampire community flourished beginning around 1993, and has grown exponentially since 1996. I'm also the administrator for [Voices of the Vampire Community \(VVC\)](#), an international network of diverse voices from the vampire community. I've shaken hands or exchanged glances with more than 300 self-identified real vampires during the many years I've been involved with the community.

Vampire Anonymity: A Matter of Safety

Despite increased publicity over the last decade, most vampires remain out of the public eye. We fear workplace, family, friend, and societal reprisals. Some in the media have chosen to characterize vampires as criminals who engage in subversive and dangerous practices that we are not involved in: ritual animal or human sacrifice, fetishism, fanatical religious expression, or cults. We are labeled as unstable threats to ourselves and others.

Real vampires do not commit human sacrifice, cannibalism, or murder. And we resent that the actions of mentally disturbed individuals are sometimes linked to modern vampirism. The insinuation is that our subculture encourages and condones such behavior. It does not.

Because of this, many vampires are reluctant to seek assistance from health professionals. They fear being labeled insane, potentially losing their jobs, and in some cases even custody of their children. Work being done by Dr. DJ Williams at Idaho State University and the Center for Positive Sexuality in Los Angeles, California, is helping break down the stigma associated with vampires. We encourage other medical professionals to do the same, and to [contact us](#) for more information on real vampires.

[Merticus](#) is a founding member of the [Atlanta Vampire Alliance](#), co-founder of the research company [Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC](#), founder of [Vampire Community News](#) on Twitter, Facebook, and WordPress, and the principal contributing author and researcher for the Vampirism & Energy Work Research Study.

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