

To: Chief Executive, Medical Director, Transfusion Laboratory Manager, Transfusion Practitioner, Chair of RTC, Chair of HTC, Consultant Haematologist with Responsibility for Blood Transfusion and England EPRR

25 July 2024

Group O RED CELL SHORTAGE - AMBER ALERT NOTICE

Dear Colleagues,

We are moving to Amber alert status for group O RBC and are asking you to implement your Emergency Blood Management Arrangements for O red cells at the Amber shortage level. We request that initial actions are implemented with immediate effect.

Thank you for your ongoing support whilst we have been taking action to avert a move to Amber alert level. Unfortunately, our O negative red blood cell stock levels are now at a point where they are below the two-day threshold. We remain in pre-Amber for B negative red cells and A positive red cells.

There has been an increase in demand from hospitals of O type blood – we have been particularly affected by the cyber incident affecting London hospitals which has meant they have needed an additional 1.7 days of O neg so far, and the variable weather has also had an impact. And, we are seeing high numbers of vacant appointments at our donor centres located in town and city centres. We currently have high profile campaigns and communication activity to encourage more donors to book appointments, but ultimately, we need more people to be regular blood donors. This is a trend seen in many other countries.

We will remove the alert once we are confident that stocks have reached a sustainable level but anticipate this will continue for a minimum of 4 weeks.

Hospital Action:

1. Implement your hospital Emergency Blood Management Arrangements for an Amber shortage status, please refer to the [NBTC red cell shortage plan](#).
2. Ensure Amber level actions in the [EBMA checklist](#) are implemented. An [Amber Level Screen Saver](#) is available for you to promote awareness.
3. Do not proceed with major, deferrable surgery in patients with anaemia until it has been properly diagnosed and treated.

4. If you haven't already done so, reduce your stock holding where possible for the duration of this alert including satellite laboratories, remote fridges and irradiated stock. A small reduction will make a big difference to national stocks. The Blood Stocks Management Scheme are available to help and advise on red cell stock reductions.
5. Use a restrictive red cell transfusion threshold, haemoglobin of 70 g/L unless patient is bleeding, has acute coronary syndrome, or is on a chronic transfusion programme.
6. Ensure you have arrangements in place to respond to any potential future red status alert. Review the [Guidance and Triage Tool for the Rationing of Blood for Massively Bleeding Patients During a Severe National Blood Shortage - 2021](#)
7. Continue to implement [Patient Blood Management](#) recommendations to support safe and appropriate use and that alternatives to transfusion are considered including:
 - use of tranexamic acid prior to major surgery
 - appropriate treatment of iron deficiency anaemia with oral or intravenous iron
 - appropriate treatment of vitamin B12 and folate deficiencies
 - single unit red cell transfusions if not actively bleeding or on a transfusion programme
 - minimise iatrogenic anaemia (reduce frequency or volume of blood sampling where appropriate).
8. Submit daily red cell stock levels to the Blood Stocks Management Scheme via the VANESA site as soon as possible to help us determine the quantities of red cells across the whole of the blood system.
9. Report any delays to transfusion or any avoidable transfusion to [Serious Hazards of Transfusion \(SHOT\)](#).

Our stock levels are updated on our website Monday, Wednesday and Friday; you can see them [here](#).

Our Donor Experience team are promoting donation where we have capacity and specifically focussing on group O donors. Local media is being used alongside direct marketing to donors in these areas. This is the most effective way to ensure the right donors can donate in the right location to maximise our capacity. Details can be found on blood.co.uk.

If you would like to donate right now [please book an appointment](#)

We apologise for the extra work and inconvenience these restrictions will cause. We are working hard to rectify the situation and will update you regularly.

If you have any questions, please contact your Customer Service Manager. Alternatively phone our Response Desk on 0208 201 3107, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday; we'll be pleased to help.

Please cascade to laboratory and clinical staff as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Gail Miflin
Chief Medical Officer
NHS Blood and Transplant

Professor Cheng-Hock Toh
Chair
National Blood Transfusion Committee

