

Blood and Transplant

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

1 October 2024

Update - Amber Alert Continues for Group O Red Cells – Risk of Red Alert for O D Negative Red Cells

Dear Colleague

We would like to thank all hospitals that have supported us already by reducing stock holding, deploying best inventory practice and Patient Blood Management initiatives.

Since we declared the Amber alert for group O red cells, overall stocks had been improving. However, we are **now seeing a sustained fall in O D negative red cells**. Without conditions changing, there is a risk that we will move to **Red alert stock levels** in three to four weeks' time. This is due to a rise in demand over the last few weeks, together with fewer existing O negative donors being eligible to donate.

We are asking you to ensure you are sustaining the actions required in an amber alert, particularly best transfusion, and inventory management practice to avoid the need for additional measures.

The hospitals that have faced the cyberattack in London are progressing with their recovery and we expect to see a reduction in their demand for group O red cells in the coming days. But this will not be enough.

We are doing everything possible to bring in enough donations and need all hospitals to ensure every step within the Amber alert is in place. In the first four weeks of the Amber Alert, we collected more than 3,000 extra units of O Neg blood.

We hope by working together, we will be able to avoid requiring further measures.

Hospital Action:

1. Maintain your Emergency Blood Management Arrangements for an Amber shortage including all Patient Blood Management initiatives and familiarise yourselves with the actions for the Red Alert level.
2. Re-review your stock holding of O negative red cells and reduce it where possible. A small reduction will make a big difference to national stocks.
3. Please continue to submit daily blood stock management data to VANESA as this supports our planning.
4. Consider stock sharing to avoid wastage.
5. To ensure that we use every available group O red cell, we ask that you accept short dated and K positive units where you are able to use them.

6. Speak to your internal comms team to ask them to promote the need to find more O negative donors. Please ask all staff who are O negative to urgently book an appointment by calling 0300 123 23 23. Your team can contact media@nhsbt.nhs.uk for content to share internally. Staff who do not know their blood type can register at blood.co.uk. We ask new donors to book into one of our 25 town and city centre NHS Donor Centres where there is good appointment availability during the day.
7. Our partnerships team could come to your hospital to blood type your staff. Our priority is to focus on hospitals close to one of the 25 fixed NHS Donor Centres as these have good appointment availability for new donors. If you are interested in hosting a blood typing session, please contact PARTNERSHIPS@nhsbt.nhs.uk. (We have a limited number of testing kits so we may have to prioritise.)

We apologise for the extra work and inconvenience these restrictions cause.

Thank you for your ongoing help. If you have any questions, please contact your Customer Service Manager. Alternatively, telephone 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.

Kind regards

Dr Gail Mifflin
Chief Medical Officer
NHS Blood and Transplant

Professor Cheng-Hock Toh
Chair
National Blood Transfusion Committee

