

iTRANSFUSEFACTSHEET

all about blood

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I NEED TO KNOW WHY BLOOD STOCKS ARE SOMETIMES LOW

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Why do blood stocks become low?

Blood stocks can become low for many different reasons. Generally there is either a reduced number of donations, eg during the cold and flu season and extended holiday periods; or unexpected, increased need for blood, eg after major trauma incidents. All of our products have a shelf-life, or “use-by” date. Platelets only have a five day shelf-life. Long holiday periods like Easter can be a challenge when there are often reduced donations and increased use in hospitals.

How does the Blood Service know if we have enough blood?

We monitor our inventory closely. We try to keep levels of all blood inventories within certain bands: not too much and not too little blood stock. In this way we also optimise the age of the blood stocks at issue as well.

There is a major project aimed at aligning our supply (what we send to hospitals), with what the hospitals need (the demand). If we know how much blood is needed, we can tailor our production and supply better.

How does the Blood Service make sure we have enough blood?

Several departments within the Blood Service interact with each other to ensure we have the right products in the right location when they are needed. The Transfusion Medicine Services and Inventory and Distribution teams will liaise with hospitals and transfusion service providers to understand needs, inventory requirements and update on blood stock levels. Operations and Marketing teams will look at blood component requirements and try to increase the number of donations when required. We will call and prompt donors.



Sometimes we target donors very specifically, depending on the type of shortage.

What are some things Marketing, Community Relations and Communication do?

Strategies can include:

- Advertising in the media, on the web and in cinemas
- Contacting donors directly through the National Contact Centre, by email, text or postage
- Contacting community, youth and business groups to encourage donation, and
- Public relations activity to generate newspaper articles and stories on radio and TV.

But what if our inventory remains low?

In times of extreme shortage we work closely with hospitals and transfusion laboratories to manage use. Doctors from Transfusion Medicine Services need to approve each request for products in short supply. In an extreme situation the “National Blood Supply Contingency Plan” is activated.

PACKFACT

The majority of donated blood goes to people with cancer, had surgery, received a burn or suffered trauma.

This outlines roles for the National Blood Authority, the Blood Service, Jurisdictional Blood Committee, Health Departments, hospitals and clinicians. An example of the extreme measures is the cancellation of elective surgery that may require blood. This is a situation everybody involved in transfusion wants to avoid.

The information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to be medical or professional advice. The disclaimer found at transfusion.com.au applies to this fact sheet.

For more information visit
transfusion.com.au

 Australian Red Cross
BLOOD SERVICE