Dear Colleagues,

Notification of Amber alert for Group O red cells starting from Tuesday 10 November 2026

In line with SNBTS and NHSScotland Integrated Blood Shortage Plan, SNBTS plan to announce an Amber alert for group O red cells to Scottish hospitals today. To allow Hospitals time to stand up their emergency blood management arrangements (EBMA) the Amber alert will start on Tuesday 10 November 2026. The communication to hospitals is included for information. You can read further information here: **SNBTS/ NHSScotland Integrated Blood Shortage Plan** (NATL 339).

This is the first Amber alert to be issued in Scotland, and it is an important part of NHS Scotland's business continuity plan for blood stocks. The alert has been issued for an initial period of 4-6 weeks but will be kept under close review. We anticipate it will be in place until we are confident that stocks have reached a sustainable level.

All donors, but particularly O negative and O positive donors are being asked to urgently book and fill appointments across Scotland in the coming days, weeks and months. You can help by encouraging friends and family to donate. Appointments are available for booking until the New Year. Appointments can be booked on scotblood.co.uk or by calling 0345 90 90 999.

I appreciate this may create additional work for many teams across SNBTS. This includes Blood Bank staff and the Transfusion Team who will be involved in enacting and supporting emergency blood management arrangements, Manufacturing and GHUB staff that liaise with hospitals and Donor and Transport Services staff who may be asked to work additional hours to maximise blood collection. I thank you in advance for your support to get Scotland back to suitable blood stock levels.

Thank you for your ongoing support during this challenging time.

Kind regards,

Dr Lorna McLintock
SNBTS Medical Director

Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service

Amber alert blood shortage for Group O red cells to be declared 10 November 2026

05 November 2026

What's the status of the alert and blood stock affected?



This is a notification that we will declare an amber alert for Group O red cells on Tuesday 10 November at 9am.

This pre-alert is intended to allow hospitals time to prepare. A further communication will follow on Tuesday 10 November 2026.

Action is required by every hospital in Scotland.

Our stock position for O D negative and O D positive is has fallen to below 2 days' supply on several occasions recently. We are seeing high numbers of vacant donor appointments in our donor centres, and the active donor base is the lowest it has ever been. We have also had challenges around staffing due to high staff turnover and staff sickness. This means we have been struggling over recent months to collect sufficient blood to meet demand. We are working hard to correct these challenges.

There will be immediate restrictions applied to stock requests. We are working to increase stock supply, however demand for blood must be managed at a local level.

We apologise for the additional workload and disruption that these restrictions will cause. We anticipate this alert will remain in place for at least 4-6 weeks but this will be kept under regular review.

What should I do?

- Activate your emergency blood management plans and convene your emergency blood management group. Please refer to the **SNBTS/ NHSScotland Integrated Blood Shortage Plan**
- Aim to reduce stockholding of Group O red cells to 80% of target levels where it is safe to do so. Review and reduce stockholding in satellite fridges where possible. Please order units of the minimum specification required.
- Restrict blood transfusion to patient category 1 and 2 of your blood management plan.

- Use a transfusion threshold haemoglobin of 70g/L unless the patient is bleeding, has acute coronary syndrome or is on a regular transfusion programme.

- Continue to implement patient blood management strategies to ensure alternatives to transfusion are employed wherever possible:
    - Tranexamic acid prior to surgery
    - Treatment of iron deficiency with oral or intravenous iron
    - Single unit red cell transfusions for stable non-bleeding patients not on a transfusion programme
    - Minimise iatrogenic anaemia

- Please complete a weekly sitrep to keep SNBTS informed of your hospital's situation during the alert and return by email to **NSS.snbtsbloodshortage@nhs.scot**.

- Ensure any delayed transfusion or avoidable transfusion is reported to SHOT.

Further resources available

- SNBTS will issue regular updates

- Find out where to donate at **https://www.scotblood.co.uk/**

- Please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries. We are here to help.

Dr Katie Hands

SNBTS Associate Medical Director

Dr Lorna McLintock

SNBTS Medical Director

Current blood stock levels across Scotland GIVE BLOOD

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