**How to Respond in a Blood Shortage – Information for Medical**

**Laboratory Technologists (MLT)**

In the event of a blood shortage, hospitals will be notified by Canadian Blood Services (CBS). If the shortage is severe, it will impact patient care. Depending upon the cause of the shortage, it could affect one or more components and products. Each hospital in Ontario should have a comprehensive plan for the management of blood shortages. This information is intended as a quick reference. Please refer to your hospital-specific plan for more details, including the way in which technologists are involved in documentation and communication at your institution.

**Some of the implications for MLT are listed below:**

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| **Situation** | **Impact(s)**  |
| * + - 1. **Amber Phase Notification** – First indication of a blood shortage. It could be provincial or national in scope.
 | * Once CBS has sent notification to your Transfusion Medicine Laboratory, you will receive a message according to your hospital’s policy informing you about the shortage and what product is affected.
* You may be asked to forward notification to others at your hospital.
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| * + - 1. **First Response –** your transfusion lab will reduce the target inventory of product held on-site
 | * No immediate significant impact.
* Inventory orders will be sent to CBS to maintain stock at your defined Amber Phase levels.
* You may be asked to report your inventory levels to CBS and/or participate on teleconferences with CBS.
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| * + - 1. **Deferral of Elective Transfusions/Procedures** – if the first response is not sufficient to correct the shortage, hospitals may be directed to defer or cancel elective use of the affected blood component(s)/product(s) to preserve the supply for life-threatening situations.
 | * Patients who may require a blood transfusion will be assessed and procedures deferred where possible.
* Document these decisions – a tracking log/form will be provided within your hospital plan.
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| * + - 1. **All orders for the affected blood component or product will be reviewed to determine urgency of need.**
 | * All orders for the affected blood component or product will be reviewed by your transfusion service (TS) medical director before being approved for issue following your hospital criteria.
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| * + - 1. **Platelet shortage**
 | Platelet dosesmay be split at sites with this ability* Extension of shelf life may occur at sites with this ability.
* Note: the actions above must be approved by your hospital TS medical director.
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| * + - 1. **Red Blood Cell shortage**
 | * Restrictive hemoglobin thresholds for transfusion will be used. If orders outside of your hospital’s Amber Phase criteria are received, forward to your TS Medical Director.
* You may need to provide red cells of a compatible but different Rh and/or ABO group for patients.
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| 1. **Plasma Protein Products** these shortages are rare and may include factor concentrates, IVIG, albumin, or others. Manufacturing problems may necessitate a very large recall of product.
 | These types of shortage are usually national in scope.Direction for action would be communicated through the National Advisory Committee on Blood and Blood Products ([www.nacblood.ca](http://www.nacblood.ca)). |
| 1. **Red Phase Notification** This level of shortage indicates a critical supply shortage.
 | * Your hospital will be notified through CBS, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be involved.
* Your TS will receive a message from CBS informing you about the shortage and what product is affected.
* All blood transfusions will be for life-threatening conditions only
* A **triage team** at your hospital will review any use of blood and follow a National Guidance document to aid in decision making.
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