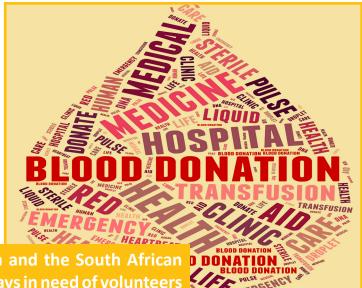
Why you should donate blood



June is National Blood Donor Month and the South African DDO National Blood Service (SANBS) is always in need of volunteers to donate blood. This is because blood has a short shelf life so stocks need to be replenished regularly throughout the year.

Who can donate blood?

These are some of the minimum requirements for blood donation:

- You have to weigh at least 50kg.
- You have to be older than 16.
- If you are older than 65 you can still donate blood as long as you have a doctor's letter saying that you are in good health.
- You have to be in good health, not feeling sick, or suffering from an infection.
- You should be leading a sexually healthy lifestyle.
- You should consider your own blood safe for transfusion to another person.

Even though your blood will be screened for blood-borne diseases, do not donate blood in order to be screened for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV, as this puts the lives and wellbeing of transfusion patients at risk.

If you meet the minimum requirements for donating blood you should eat a balanced meal 4 hours before you donate blood. Within 24 hours of donating, your body will have replaced all of the blood that you donated and you will be able to exercise as normal.

Did you know that blood has a shelf life?

Most people know you are allowed to donate blood every 56 days, but did you know that the blood you donate has a shelf life? Red blood cells can be stored at 6°C for up to 42 days for transfusion to most adult patients.

The reason for this is because the microcapillaries in stored blood slowly start to lose their oxygencarrying capacity. The timeline is far more drastic for babies – only blood less than five days old may be used for transfusion to newborn infants, or, in exceptional cases, to babies still in the womb.

Special blood group O

It is especially important that those with group O blood donate as their type of blood can be used for all blood types. This is especially important in an emergency when there is less time to determine the patient's blood group.

Donate blood today and save a life.