

South African National Blood Service (SANBS) encourages New Year donations as blood stocks sit below optimal levels

Johannesburg, 09 January 2026- As South Africans settle into the new year, the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) would like to warmly welcome everyone back and express appreciation to all donors for their continued generosity. Your commitment throughout the year helps save countless lives, and SANBS remains grateful for every person who takes the time to donate.

As the new year begins, SANBS is raising awareness about a familiar seasonal pattern, a dip in national blood collections during and immediately after the festive season. While this is expected, rebuilding healthy stock levels early in the year is essential to ensure the continuous availability of blood products for patients who depend on them.

While many households return to normal rhythm, thousands of patients across the country begin 2026 with a very different hope. Their new year is not defined by goals or celebration, but by the quiet wish for strength to return, for treatments to work, and for the simple, life-giving gift of blood to reach them in time.

Behind current blood stock levels are real people; mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and children — receiving treatment in hospitals every day. Their recovery, and in some cases survival, depends on the continued availability of donated blood.

Why Blood Stocks Drop in January?

There are several factors contributing to blood stocks dropping in January, and largely impacting on SANBS' reliance on organised blood drives, such as:

1. Holiday travel and movement

Donors are often away from their regular donation centres during December, leading to fewer visits.

2. Limited workplace and campus drives

Workplaces, schools and universities and key collection points close or operate on reduced schedules over the festive season.

Universal Blood Type



Donates to Everyone

Receives from

sanbs.org.za
Toll free 0800 11 9031

Board of Directors: Executives: V Reddy (CEO), T Kgape (CFO), K Van Den Berg (Medical Director) Non-Executives: T Mokgatla (Chairperson), F Burn, S Fakie, G Goolab, C Henry, S Kabane, G Leong, L Molefe, P Mthethwa, M Vaithilingum
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3. Meeting demand during the festive period with reduced donations. Emergency medical care, childbirth and the ongoing treatment of chronic conditions continue year-round, placing sustained pressure on available blood supplies.

4. Disrupted donor routines

Year-end events, travel and family commitments can cause regular donors to miss their usual donations schedule, creating a visible gap in blood collections by January.

SANBS is encouraging O and B blood group donors who are due for donation to donate as these groups contribute significantly to the stability of the national blood supply:

- O negative is the universal blood type used in emergencies.
- Group B contributes significantly to maintaining balanced stock for specific patient groups.

However, SANBS emphasises that all blood groups are welcome and needed.

"We appreciate every South African who donates blood, and we want to start the year by saying thank you," says Thandi Mosupye, Senior Manager: Marketing, Communication and Brand at SANBS.

"January is a challenging month for collections, but it is also an opportunity. If donors, especially those with O and B blood groups visit a donor centre early in the year, we can stabilise the national blood supply quickly and ensure hospitals continue caring for patients without interruption. We encourage all eligible donors to make time to give the gift of life."

SANBS invites all eligible donors to make a blood donation at their nearest donor centre or mobile drive. A single donation takes only minutes and can save up to three lives, to support patients in need.

"Whether you are an O, A, B or AB donor your contribution matters, and we welcome you," adds Mosupye.

Who Can Donate?

- First-time donors must be between 16 and 75 years old.
- Donors must weigh at least 50 kg (55 kg for platelet donations).
- Donors should be in good health, lead a low-risk lifestyle, and consider their blood safe for transfusion.
- Donors should have eaten within four hours before donating.
- Whole blood may not have been donated in the last 56 days, or platelets/plasma in the last 14 days.

For more information or to find your nearest donor centre, please contact the SANBS call centre on **0800 11 9031** or visit the SANBS website.

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Issued on behalf of SANBS by Meropa Communications. For further information, please contact: Tshilidzi Matidza, +27763061197, tshilidzim@meropa.co.za

ABOUT SANBS

The South African National Blood Service (SANBS) is an independent non-profit organisation and a leader in blood transfusion. SANBS operates in eight of the nine provinces in South Africa (except for the Western Cape, which the Western Cape Blood Service services) and provides crucial support to countries in the SADC region.

The organisation prides itself on being the lifeblood of South Africa's healthcare system, providing over one million world-class blood products. This pedigree comes from world-class testing and collection protocols, ensuring that the transfused blood is always of the highest quality. SANBS operates a vast network of donor centres, including more than 70 fixed centres and over 100 mobile collection sites daily.

SANBS aims to collect 3,500 units of blood daily to ensure a safe and sufficient supply for South Africa's healthcare system. Regular donations are critical because a unit of blood only lasts 42 days. We encourage donors to commit to giving blood frequently, ensuring a continuous supply for those in need.

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Universal Blood Type



Donates to Everyone

Receives from The logo for O+ blood type, consisting of a red circle with a white horizontal line through it.